

Les/Gay Rights Bill Passes Mass House!

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BOOK REVIEW

CAUGHT LOOKING · BLACKBIRD · NICARAGUA

Shut Out in Massachusetts:
Gay and Disabled People Shout Louder

news notes

quote of the week

"Dawn must admit, however, that the anti-porn crusade has given Andrea 'Fatty' Dworkin a job and enough money to keep her in pizzas for quite some time. God knows what mischief she would be up to with free time and hungry [sic]."

—Dawn Ivory, in the Guide to Gay New England, April 1987. Dawn is among many Dworkin critics who attack her for her fat — as if her weight were a measure of her politics.



Lesbians and gay men protest at Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis' April 29 announcement of his presidential candidacy. Dukakis has been the target of numerous protests over the past two years because of his support for a policy which virtually prohibits lesbian and gay foster parenting.

Kim Westheimer

gay profs get spousal benefits

NOVA SCOTIA, Canada — Two gay professors at Acadia University here have won a two-year fight to force the school to recognize their lovers as spouses under the university's medical plan, according to *Rites of Toronto*. While faculty-university agreements include protection on the basis of sexual orientation, the insurance company carrying the university's medical benefits plan had refused to extend spouse benefits for lesbian and gay couples. The case was resolved when the insurance company capitulated.

—Marc Stein

homemade medicines to treat aids

CHICAGO — A series of clandestine clinics in more than 40 North American cities are distributing experimental medicines to people with AIDS, according to information published in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, via *El Diario-La Prensa* of New York City.

The clinics, which operate underground to avoid legal problems and elude anti-gay groups, are directed by volunteers. They reportedly prepare cheap versions of experimental formulas and distribute prescriptions against AIDS that have not yet been approved by the government.

Unidentified sources told the *Sun-Times* that thousands of persons are being treated through the clinics.

—John Kyper

anti-apartheid 'terrorists' blamed for aids

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — Foreign Minister Roelof F. Botha claims that rebels entering the country from neighboring Black African states are to blame for spreading AIDS in South Africa according to the AP via the *New York Post* and the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

"AIDS gets into this country in ways you wouldn't even think of," said Botha, speaking during a campaign appearance. "Terrorists cross our borders carrying a more dangerous bomb in their bodies than in their hands. They come from camps where AIDS is rife."

Health officials report that 64 people in South Africa, most of them gay or bisexual men, have AIDS or have died of the disease.

—Martin Heggstad

maryland defeats sodomy repeal

ANNAPOLIS, MD — On March 31, the Maryland House of Delegates Judiciary Committee voted 15-7 to defeat a bill to repeal the state's sodomy law, according to the *Washington Blade*. The bill, which passed in the State Senate March 16 by a 27-20 vote, would have repealed state laws which impose fines and jail terms for those convicted of having oral sex or "any other unnatural or perverted sexual practice."

Supporters of repeal attributed the loss to the month-long delay between hearings on the bill and the vote. One committee member, who asked not to be identified, said that Committee Chairman William Horne (D-Eastern Shore) delayed the vote to increase its chances of failure.

The vote surprised many, including Delegate Ken Montague (D-Baltimore City) who led the fight for repeal in the committee. Montague said there appeared to be sufficient votes for repeal shortly after hearings in early March.

Chairman Horne reportedly failed to distribute a letter to committee members from Baltimore State Attorney Kurt Schmoke. The letter refuted testimony against the bill by Deputy Baltimore State's Attorney Alexander Palenscar. Palenscar, who submitted the only testimony to the committee opposing the bill, had argued that the law was a necessary tool for prosecuting sex abuse cases.

Maryland activist Perdi Jude said that the repeal bill had gone "further this year than it has ever gone before." Delegate Sheila Hixson (D-Montgomery Co.), who sponsored the bill in the House, said she would be interested in sponsoring it again next year and said she planned to discuss the issue with legislators in states where repeal bills have passed.

—Marc Stein

south african gay conference planned

CAPE TOWN, South Africa — A number of lesbian and gay groups here are planning a meeting this month to discuss racism, sexism, and how to increase cooperation with each other. According to the International Lesbian and Gay Association *Bulletin*, a key item on the agenda concerns a recent action by the mostly controversial white Gay Association of Southern Africa (GASA).

GASA, which has in the past been accused of failing to fight apartheid, recently agreed to work with a government-controlled research institute to investigate gay lifestyles in the country.

The Rand Gay Organization, a multi-racial gay group which will attend the conference, refused to participate in the research because they say it would mean cooperating with the racist and homophobic government. RGO members say they have been harassed by white gay people calling for a ban against RGO and for the detainment of RGO chairman, Alfred Machela.

Other groups participating in the April conference include Lesbians and Gays Against Oppression, the African Gay Organization and IMPACT, a fundraising group.

GRO is the only truly multi-racial gay group in South Africa, with 417 Black, "coloured" and Indian members and 187 white members, many of whom have resigned from GASA.

—Wendy Scott

news notes compiled by stephanie poggi

Mass. Les/Gay Rights Bill

Continued from page 1

someone fire a Black person or a Jew?" "That is a problem today," responded Filippi.

Vicious attacks on lesbians and gay men notwithstanding, activists who worked on H3445 were elated by the bill's passage. "What a wonderful victory," said Arline Isaacson, co-chair of the Massachusetts Lesbian and Gay Political Caucus. "It says a lot about the increasing political sophistication of our community. We have power. We can play a role if we know how to work it."

Both Isaacson and Will Hutchison, president of the Boston Lesbian and Gay Political Alliance, attributed the success of the bill, at least partially, to support by Governor Michael Dukakis, who personally spoke with a number of representatives. "For political

reasons, the Governor has decided it's important to support the gay rights bill," said Hutchison.

"It's important for [Dukakis to support the bill] if he ever hopes to get anybody in the gay and lesbian community supporting him in his presidential run," said Isaacson. "He has been very supportive of the civil rights bill and I'm thankful for his support. And if he gets it through the Senate I'll be very thankful for it."

Lesbian and gay rights legislation has been introduced in the Massachusetts legislature for the past fifteen years. In 1983 the legislation passed the House and lost by one vote in the Senate. In 1985 the lesbian and gay rights bill lost by an overwhelming majority in the House. Activists attributed that loss to sensationalistic media

coverage of the foster care debate and ignorance regarding AIDS. The legislation was introduced shortly after the formation of state policy which makes it nearly impossible for lesbians and gay men to become foster parents.

This year's passage was helped by proponents' ability to "point out that this is a basic civil rights bill [and] to keep away from a debate on foster care," said Roosevelt. First-term representatives were also instrumental, added Roosevelt, who is himself newly elected. Of 22 new representatives, 17 voted in favor of the bill.

In addition, some longtime opponents of the bill changed their vote. Michael McGlynn (D-Medford), who is currently running for mayor in Medford, has voted against lesbian and gay rights

legislation for the past nine years. Not only did McGlynn vote for the bill this year, he called some gay constituents in his district to inform them of his vote. Constituent Warren Patterson, who has written to ask McGlynn to support lesbian and gay rights legislation for the past nine years, said he received an evening call from McGlynn after the House's initial vote on the bill. According to Patterson, McGlynn said, "I want to tell you I was educated for the first time by the tireless energy of Arline Isaacson and Mark Roosevelt."

Activists are unsure of the legislation's fate in the Senate. Traditionally the Senate is more conservative than the House. On the same day that the House passed the lesbian and gay rights bill,

the Senate voted favorably on a bill which would require mandatory AIDS testing for people seeking marriage licenses. That legislation, sponsored by Edward Kirby (R-Whitman), received an unfavorable report from the joint committee on health care earlier this year. Kirby's legislation must be voted on one more time by the Senate before it is passed to the House.

The lead sponsor of the gay/lesbian rights bill in the Senate is Sen. Royal Bolling (D-Boston). The Alliance suspects that the following senators may be particularly important to contact regarding the bill: Sen. Berthonazzi (D-Milford), Sen. Melconian (D-Springfield), Sen. Sheehy (D-Lowell), Sen. Webber (D-Pittsfield) and Sen. Wetmore (D-Barre).



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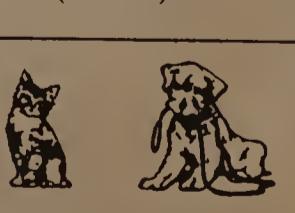
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Foster Equality Meets Subway Accessibility

By Kim Westheimer

BOSTON — Lesbians and gay men joined disability rights activists in a rowdy demonstration outside of the opening ceremonies for the new "Orange Line" subway stations.

The May 2 demonstration targeted the administration of Governor Michael Dukakis for the state's inaccessible subway system and for a state foster care policy which discriminates against lesbians and gay men.

Chanting "all we are saying is give us a lift," "Governor Dukakis you should know, barriers have got to go," and "foster equality," the forty demonstrators drowned out portions of the early morning invitation-only event. According to Chuck Rosina, who was in charge of the sound system for the day's festivities, "people in the back heard the demonstration more than they heard the speakers."

While the new stops on the Orange Line are accessible to people in wheelchairs, the majority of the subway system is not accessible. The Massachusetts Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities (MCCD) pointed out the following problems with the current system:

- The Green Line is inaccessible to wheelchair users and those who can't climb stairs. In San Francisco wheelchair users ride similar vehicles which are modified to be accessible.
- Only half of all Mass. Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) buses have a wheelchair



"Equal access — equal rights"

lift. In Seattle and Denver all public buses are accessible to wheelchair users.

- There are no accessible subways or buses available to East Boston residents traveling downtown.
- Twenty-three blind riders have fallen off subway platforms according to the Mass. Commission for the Blind. Yet the MBTA has failed to install tactile stripping which has successfully been used in San Francisco.
- The MBTA does not post signs with information crucial to deaf and hearing-impaired riders.

While the state funds "The Ride" — vans which can be called by disabled people for transportation — reservations must be made at least three to five days in advance, and even then there is no guarantee that a ride will be provided at the time requested. In addition, The Ride does not begin running until 9 a.m. A number of people were late for the 9 a.m. press conference scheduled before the rally because of The Ride's lack of early morning service.

Mike Muehe, of MCCD, said he was pleased with the presence of the Gay and Lesbian Defense Committee and disability rights groups at the demonstration. "We're facing the same kind of discrimination that gay men and lesbians are facing," said Muehe. "It's institutional discrimination. I'm glad we're here to show solidarity."

"We're here to remind [Dukakis] that we won't go away," said Patty Gorlin, a lesbian member of the Disabled People's Liberation Front (DPLF). "[This] forces people to see us," added Linda Gwizdak, another lesbian member of DPLF. "They don't like to see us in their faces."



"They [Dukakis et. al] don't like to see us in their faces."

MBTA Move Draws Protest

BOSTON — The Mass. Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) has angered many residents of Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, and the South End by instituting a new route for the Orange Line subway. Members of the communities, primarily people of color, protested the loss of subway service on April 30, the last day the old Orange Line ran.

Approximately fifty people attended the protest which included a mock funeral procession. While buses are currently being run from the old stops to the new, transportation will now be slower and more expensive than before.

Residents of the affected neighborhoods also testified at an MBTA board meeting on April 29. Nearly 200 people attended the meeting which discussed a replacement service for the old Orange Line. The MBTA has not yet decided on a replacement service for the old Orange Line.

—Kim Westheimer

In D.C. for Justice and Peace

Continued from page 1

termination of U.S. support for apartheid, including aid to the Unita rebels in Angola.

"Today, America's voice of conscience is speaking," said Mobilization steering committee convener David Reed of the Coalition for a New Foreign Policy. "This mobilization signals our determined opposition to the government's ill-advised — and if we are honest — murderous policies abroad."

Actor Ed Asner told the crowd, "It is not us who are traitors to the government, but the government who is traitor to us. The Administration has lied to us, squandered our resources, attacked our social liberties, vandalized the ideals that we are taught to hold dear. If none dare call that treason, at least let us not call it reason."

Of all the platform participants, who included Eleanor Smeal of NOW and Jesse Jackson, it was

singer Holly Near who most clearly acknowledged the presence and influence of gay men and lesbians. "This is a time when we are being asked to be incredibly remarkable, to somehow stretch ourselves to be bigger and more complete human beings than we've ever been asked to be before," Near said. "It requires all of us doing some things that might not be comfortable" — men standing up for women's rights and equality, British supporting "people in Ireland trying to have their own country," whites helping people of color break the "racist chain in the world," Christians opposing rampant anti-Semitism, and Jews acknowledging Palestinians' place in the world.

When she urged "straight people to stand up for gay people, saying we are not going to have homophobia in this country," the huge crowd cheered the loudest.

Included in the next song was the line, "Now one man fights the KKK, but he hates the queers. One woman works for ecology, but it's equal rights she fears.... We are the sailors and we are in mutiny. The safety of the journey is in unity."

Despite the general lack of recognition for lesbians and gay men at the march, the gay contingent held its own. Corinna Lewis of New York City said while "we should have been further up front, the gay and lesbian contingent is bigger and bigger and louder and louder in every march, because we're not going back. We're fighting against oppression that's coming down harder and harder. Just like everyone else, we're feeling stronger and we're fighting back. People need to know, as the chant says, we are everywhere — we're gay and lesbian, but we're also anti-war,

COOL/Shescape Reach Impasse

By Kim Westheimer

NEW YORK — Negotiations have broken down between a women's production company and a group of lesbians who have charged the company with racist practices.

Members of the Committee of Outraged Lesbians (COOL) filed a complaint against Shescape Productions with the New York Human Rights Commission earlier this year (See *GCN*, Vol 14, No. 28). They charged Shescape with discriminatory admission policies, claiming that a number of Black and Latina lesbians have been turned away from Shescape events while white women were allowed to enter.

Parties who file a complaint with the Commission must enter negotiations to determine whether a conflict can be resolved. If negotiation proves unsuccessful, the Human Rights Commission conducts findings to determine whether there is probable cause for complaint.

"We thought things were going somewhat okay," said Nancy K., a member of COOL.

"[But] I think Shescape was not making a concerted effort." According to Maureen Tighe, co-counsel for COOL, a satisfactory settlement would need to include a specific events admission policy by Shescape outlining necessary identification, types of dress and age minimum. "They [Shescape] couldn't guarantee what [COOL] wanted," said Tighe. "We just don't feel the allegations have been taken seriously enough."

"As I understand it they [COOL] have refused to settle," said Iris Darvin, lawyer for Shescape. "I'm not sure why. We had several drafts of settlement agreements [and] had a meeting with their counsel and the Human Rights Commission. We thought we had a settlement."

COOL has organized a number of demonstrations outside Shescape events. Another demonstration will be held at a Shescape production at Private Eyes, 12 W 21st St. between 6 and 10 p.m.

—filed from Boston

AIDS Definition

Continued from page 1

tions of ARC, which account for about twenty percent of total ARC cases. The CDC declined to make public the proposal, but Dr. Rick Vought of the Vermont State Health Department told *GCN* that it would include: people with wasting disease, who lost up to 25 percent of their body weight; viral infections of the brain which cause memory loss; and people with tuberculosis who test HIV positive.

Vought, who is also president of the Council of State Epidemiologists, said that "tinkering with case definitions is a reflection of the wide spectrum of illness associated with the [HIV] virus. He said he hoped the new definition

would "get across the idea that the problem is not isolated to people with AIDS."

But, said Vought, to include more than the most severe cases would "raise havoc" in reporting procedures. The CDC's 1985 revised case definition, much less radical than the latest proposal, caused confusion in health departments across the country, according to Vought. He said frequent changes in the case definitions may ruin the ability of health experts to trace the disease over time. "We will lose our ability to tell how we are doing if we are not careful to come up with new accounting procedures that allow for new case

Continued on page 8

Same Struggle?

Continued from page 1

the response of the lesbian and gay marshalls. But a friend pointed out that the marshalls' job could have been to make our move into the line smoother, rather than stop it completely. And everyone involved in the march should have let us use our anger, rather than telling us we were being paranoid.

Black, Latino, labor union people. We're everybody, so we need to connect all the issues so people can't lock us out and say, 'Oh, they're just lesbians and gays, let them go to the end.' No. We're everyone, everybody."

Lesbian/gay contingent chants included: "Faggots and dykes against the right," "Support for sex, not for war; U.S. out of El Salvador," and "Fight AIDS, not Nicaragua!"

Despite the rain and the "incredible" wait, Nora Janeway of Cambridge, Mass., called the march fun. "One of the most exciting things politically was the Peace Train coming down from Boston. It was wonderful to hear there was a Latino car," others for affinity groups on disarmament, for unions and for lesbians and gay men. "It was really exciting." In all about 2300 people in 18 cars and 22 buses came from Boston.

Several participants called the mobilization a good rehearsal for the Oct. 11 National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. "Logistically, it's very similar. The kind of network that's able to spawn such a march has taken shape in the lesbian and gay community to link up with allies around the nation," said Cincinnati Shane Que Hee, treasurer of the March's midwest region. "In October, we want to have a million people come here."

For Becky Peterson, convener of the Lesbian/Gay People's Union at Earlham College in Richmond, Ind., the challenge was clear. "There are a lot of people here with a lot of energy. I hope we all are going to take it back home and use it to do something locally as well as nationally."

Community Voices

if we don't care enough . . .

Dear GCN:

I am writing you this to voice my feelings as to what I see about other gay male and lesbian prisoners seeking penpals.

I could be wrong but to my way of thinking, if we are lonely we should not mind corresponding to others who are in prison both those of our own sex or for that matter a gay female or male writing to a gay male or female.

I mean like there is a lot of hell laid upon us by those who run these prisons and one of the reasons for this I feel is that so many of us don't give a shit about all of our other gay family in prison. If we don't care enough to take time to write each other, then we can't really look for others to give a shit.

Sincerely,
David Hoover
73A 875
135 State St.
Auburn, NY 13024

[Prisoner Project Note: Please help us update & correct our list of states which DO & DON'T let prisoners write other prisoners, either in the same state or in other states. Drop us a line if there's a mistake in our list.

States that DO (usually) let prisoners write other state prisoners are: VT, NY, MA, NJ, FL, MS, OH, PA, NC, KS, TX, CA, NM, CO, OR, MT, WA, LA, NE, MD, AZ, GA, AR, MI, MO.

States that DON'T (usually) are: AL, RI, OK, NV, IA, ID, WV, WY, TN, WI, IN.

If you have info on states not listed here or corrections, please let us know. It saves other prisoners a lot of wasted postage. Thanks!

fat phobia runs rampant

Dear GCN:

I was surprised and delighted to see you seriously address fat oppression and liberation last issue in your news notes. Even among feminists, gays and lesbians, fat phobia runs rampant and almost no one is willing to admit it, much less discuss it.

Incredible numbers of women and some men are ruining their health through dieting and hating themselves via their bodies, and feminists seem to feel we are "above it all" when issues of lookism arise. Self-esteem is crucial to our ability to act freely and to make social change. Women who are at war with their bodies can't possibly have the strength that self-esteem builds, the strength that enables us to live as whole, free human beings.

Fat-hating comments, whether directed towards others or ourselves, are deeply destructive. We "progressives" have no excuse for perpetuating hateful patriarchal myths about body size and fostering women's preoccupation with diet and weight. Thanks to *Matrix* and *GCN* for dealing with this neglected and apparently threatening issue.

Liz Nania
Brookline, MA

•••••

Lesbian/Gay Pride Weekend Boogie for Free

GCN and the Boston-Area Pledge of Resistance are co-sponsoring two (2!) Lesbian/Gay Pride gala benefits and we need volunteers to help out, in return for a free ticket.

THE DANCE BRIGADE — the nationally-renowned dance/theater group — will perform at the Strand Theater Friday, June 12, the night before Boston Pride.

DEAN AND THE WEENIES and **RIGHT TIME** — two unbelievably hot bands — will have us all boogie-ing down the night of Pride at, of all places, City Hall, Saturday, June 13.

For both events we need ticket takers, raffle ticket sales people, stage help, clean-up crew and more. We'll need ushers at The Dance Brigade and bartenders (inexperienced queers welcome) at the dance party.

Call Anne Phibbs to sign up, preferably at 625-8879 evenings, or if necessary, at 426-7075 days.

response from a so-called s/m victim

Dear GCN:

I am responding to yet another attack on s/m lesbians in Community Voices (*GCN* April 12-18, 1987). M. Lynne Murphy states: "I fail to see how a victim of s/m violence . . . is able to experience any feelings of power." As one of those so-called victims, I feel compelled to respond.

First of all, I am no victim. Having survived real violence (both physical and psychological), I know the difference between abuse, and a consensual exchange of power for the erotic enjoyment of both parties. To be referred to as a victim is both insulting and patronizing.

As to how a masochist could experience a feeling of power . . . I was raised to believe that a good girl grew up to get married (to a man), and to do her duty to him now and then. Sex wasn't a topic for discussion. Certainly my body wasn't meant to be enjoyed. It was therefore empowering to come out as a lesbian. But my sexual needs still weren't quite being met. I gradually discovered I liked it rough. I tried to suppress my politically incorrect fantasies but they kept resurfacing. Coming out as a masochist was harder in a lot of ways than coming out as a lesbian. To be seen as a pervert by members of my own community (not to mention the rest of the world!) was very painful at first. But s/m enabled me to more fully be myself — to experience my creativity, my self-confidence and my personal power much more so than ever before. I am finally reclaiming my body and my sexuality. No one, whether it's a right-wing reactionary, or a feminist that thinks she knows what's best for me, can take that away from me ever again.

Finally, I want to say something about those supposedly "oppressive" sadists. The women I have "bottomed" for in scenes have been some of the most affectionate, loving friends I have ever known. But then, I don't think the anti-s/m folks want to hear about that.

Sincerely,
Sally
Somerville, MA

change laws and attitudes

Dear GCN:

Sue Hyde's Speaking Out article ("Hardwick, Sodomy Laws and Our Fight for Sexual Freedom," 3/15/87) is the best analysis I've read on personal privacy intrusion by the state. It brilliantly highlights the necessity for political action.

Police enforcement of the sodomy laws can be punishing in and of itself. While the literal intent of police arrest is to "arrest," or stop, certain behaviors, the process can be a forceful "punishment." Those charged face often abusive arrest procedures and costly legal proceedings. Whatever the trial results, one can be taken for a long ride.

Sodomy laws form the anti-gay core of our justice system. These antique statutes are sustained by a legislature unable or unwilling to distinguish between the roles of church and state. They violate our privacy and must be abolished.

Certainly, anti-gay behavior persists in states without sodomy laws. If we are to achieve genuine sexual liberty, both law and attitudes must change. The law is only as moral as its culture, only as sex-and-gay-positive as those who make and support it.

The most powerful tool I know of for changing culture is coming out. Coming out to parents and friends alters our relationships. It jolts and erodes their fear and hatred.

Lawmakers, friends and relatives who are personally acquainted with lesbians and gay men will be prepared to help challenge anti-gay behavior and strike down sodomy laws.

Demian
Seattle, WA

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misinformation in women in theatre festival review

Dear GCN:

I am writing to respond to the review written by Mara Math on the Women in Theatre Festival '87. Ordinarily I don't have such a strong reaction to reviews because I know that taste is, well, a matter of taste; one woman's delight can be another woman's boredom. What distresses me is her reference to my politics, lack of feminism, and the Festival's program copy. I do not object to her reviews of the pieces presented, although I can't say I agree with all of them.

Clearly, this person came to the Festival with an attitude. Otherwise, why would she criticize my politics without ever interviewing me about my beliefs? To say that I run the WITF for the purpose of attracting grant money is ridiculous. We haven't been able to get much because we are the *Women in Theatre* Festival, obviously. To say that I think it was "...merely accidental, and unrelated to sexism that women are overlooked" is equally absurd given my commitment of three years work (and I was not alone) to bring these women artists to the stage. All of this "reporting" is based on a radio interview in which I said we do not choose performers on the basis of their feminism and that I do not believe that all women have the same "voice," artistically, politically, or otherwise. If Ms. Math had written this in response to a newspaper interview, without any substantiation through interview, the review could not be accepted as professional journalism.

Shame on you *GCN*; The *Herald* does better than you. Their reviewer had a lot of questions about why the Festival is so "lesbian," but she

had the courtesy of interviewing me before she spoke.

The misinformation in the article continues with several references to our program copy, where the reviewer implies that we did not use the word "lesbian," nor did we discuss a performer's disability. Well, this is another matter where a simple question to any of the producers of the Festival would have set the record straight. We do not write copy for the program because we prefer to let the artists speak for themselves. In many cases, we are contracted to use the copy they provide. If Mara Math wants to write *WOW* Cafe in NY and tell them they avoided the use of the word LESBIAN in their program notes, I would be glad to furnish their address.

And to pursue this further is petty. I do not know your reviewer's thoughts on the matter. I, too, share a rage at the constant discrimination against women in our society, and can sympathize with her fears of the "post feminist" age. I would be glad to talk to her at length about what we are trying to do.

In one way this review has brought up some very important issues which need discussion. To wit: why are we the only Women in Theatre Festival in this country? I'd love to be in a financially stable position, paid for my work as a producer, and able to promote Festivals that focused on different women's work. Give me a paid staff and I could do a Lesbian and Gay Festival, a Third World Women's Festival, a Women in Comedy Festival. You name it. Money is the name of the game here. We all work hard and burnout is a

very real possibility. We depend on the women's community — gay/straight/black/white — support from the Festival. Reviews that discuss our politics, or lack of, without a dialogue with us serve no one. There is something in the tone of the review that suggests that the Festival, such as it is now, should cease to be. In what way would that serve the women artists, or the women's community?

Many of the women producers I know stopped producing for this very reason. "Politics" and "Art" and their connection are not well understood. We need a forum for discussion on these issues where we will not lose our shirts or our tempers. So all of you out there, if you don't like what you see, come work with us to make it better. We have a lot of wonderful plans for this year, including a women's experimental solo performance series, with women from Germany, Denmark, Israel, Norway, Poland, and Japan. (This in collaboration with Double Edge Theatre), and expansion of our workshops in writing, acting and voice. Next year promises to be great, with performances by the Jamaican company Sistren, and the Northern Irish company Charabanc. Please join us in bringing their work to the stage. We need support in time and money; we need constructive and informed criticism. We will grow strong and blossom with your help in the years to come.

Sincerely,
Sophie Parker
Festival Director
Boston, MA

GayCommunityNews

Cover design by Dan Mishkind

Top: From *Caught Looking*. Anonymous French photograph, ca 1890, courtesy Vasta Images.

Bottom: Debbie Rich photo.

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Speaking Out

Talking to Our Straight, Liberal Friends about Dukakis

By Cindy Rizzo

May 8th marks the two-year anniversary of the removal of two young children from the approved foster home of a Boston gay male couple. It is the day that Governor Michael Dukakis set in motion a series of events culminating in the offensive foster care policy that virtually excludes lesbian, gay male and other "non-traditional" households from the foster care system.

In the confusing and chaotic first few weeks after the children were removed, while the state was "deliberating" over what its policy should be, we were not yet clear on who were our friends and who were our foes. Everyone was willing to meet with the gay community: Human Services Secretary Phil Johnston, Dukakis aides Maryann Walsh and John Sasso. We were led to believe that a fair and open process was taking place. Even gays and lesbians in high places misled us.

One thing we can learn from other civil rights movements is that you do not forget. Foster care cannot be dismissed from our agenda or bargained away for something else.

It was shocking to some of us who had been going to these endless meetings, who had overseen the massive letter-writing campaigns, who had garnered support for our position from children's advocate and human service workers from all over the country, that such a horrible policy would be declared. But when the dust settled and when Dukakis was finally forced to speak publicly on this issue, it became clear that he had not been aloof and uninvolved. In fact, evidence indicated that he was the *main architect* of not only the policy, but of the original removal of the children from the home of the gay male couple.

Now, two years later, within weeks of this infamous anniversary, Michael Dukakis has formally announced his candidacy for President. I'm saddened that he has made it impossible for me and my friends to support him. I like working on political campaigns. I like the idea that Boston is going to be a focal point for political activity at the national level. I used to see Dukakis as an "acceptable liberal," especially compared to the pool of other realistic choices we have. But foster care changed all that for me and for the majority of lesbians and gay men in this community.

Recently, two straight co-workers told me that they were doing work for the Dukakis campaign. They know I am a lesbian and am involved in GLAD (Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders), which is suing the state over the foster care policy. They also know I am a parent. I told them that I could never support Dukakis because of foster care, that it was an issue that personally affected me as a lesbian parent and that I was actively working against Dukakis' bigoted policy. They acknowledged that they "could understand that" and the discussion ended. Afterward, I found that I was unable to get this

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like crazy

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Some of them talk to you like a dog and you can't stand up for your rights. I might be here for another year. They got one guy with a shank [homemade knife] and tried to give him the charge. This prison is not run right at all.

Please write me back and tell me what I can do. This is my first time here.

Tommy T. Moore
639621 Box 553
Rt 2 Box 13A
Immokalee, FL 33934

Dear GCN:

I got the [sample] paper you sent to me and I like it and wish I can get more. The guards keep fucking with me. They are always hassling me because I'm gay and they always lock me up [isolation] because of it. I don't know how long I can take this. Please help. They search me, random feeling up like crazy. They tear up my bunk like madmen. I don't like it one bit cause I do not do nothing at all. I get along with some of the queens at this place. Some of them get on my nerves at times but I love them. I just don't be bother.

Please keep the GCN coming. I love it!
Brick Waller
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conversation out of my mind. Why was this news affecting me so strongly, I wondered?

I realized that I was upset because my coworkers had failed to see my issue as their issue. Instead, the underlying assumption had been "that is right for you and this is right for me." Remember the old adage from the '60s: "you do your thing and I'll do mine, and if by chance we meet, it's beautiful"? This kind of thinking is not only outmoded today, but where the fundamental civil rights of a people are at stake, it is downright dangerous.

I fear that those of us who work with and interact with straight people (which is most of us) are going to start hearing a lot of this. Our response, I think, must not only include a statement of our "problems with Dukakis," but it must be more comprehensive. I have already been called "one-issue oriented" because I refuse to support Dukakis after his performance on the foster care issue. I am told that "nobody's perfect." Why can people (many of whom subscribe to liberal politics) feel free to make this kind of statement when they would never feel this way had the issue been anyone else's civil rights? Why is our refusal to support a person with a bigoted, narrow-minded point of view, who governs by making policy out of prejudice, a sign of political rigidity? Why isn't the defense of basic civil rights, and the opposition to the oppression, no matter who the victim, everyone's issue? When such an issue is at stake, there can be no "greater good." There, in the end, can be no reason to support Dukakis that is more important than opposing his acts of bigotry, as evidenced by his handling of the foster care issue.

This is what I must, and we must, tell our straight, liberal friends (and any gay people who might get a case of campaign fever, including and especially gay politicians). One thing we can learn from other civil rights movements is that you do not forget. Foster care cannot be dismissed from our agenda or bargained away from something else. Once it is given up, not only can it never be won again, but it makes it easier for other rights and gains to be taken away from us in a similar manner. We do not demonstrate that we care about AIDS funding or a gay rights bill or political access for our community by showing a willingness to sacrifice other rights.

I urge you to continue to think about the foster care issue, to continue to support groups like GLAD and the Gay and Lesbian Defense Committee, which are still involved in the fight to change the policy and to educate people on this issue. I urge you to withhold your money, your time and your support from the Dukakis campaign and to explain to your friends why you are doing this, and why they should too. As lesbians and gay men, Michael

In fact, evidence indicated that Dukakis was the main architect of not only the new foster care policy, but of the original removal of the children from the home of the gay male couple.

Dukakis has offered us nothing in return for our support. It's important to point out that foster care is not the only example of Dukakis' homophobia: he has failed to issue an executive order protecting gay and lesbian state workers from discrimination and he has yet to make any openly gay appointments to high level positions in the state. As people who fight for civil rights, he has demonstrated his disdain for us.

We must be proud to take this position and to stay with it. We should proudly tell our straight, liberal friends that we have sided against bigotry and that they should join us. There's another old adage from the '60s, which has withstood the test of time: "no one is free 'til we're all free."

Cindy Rizzo is President of the Board of Directors of Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD), New England's lesbian and gay legal foundation.

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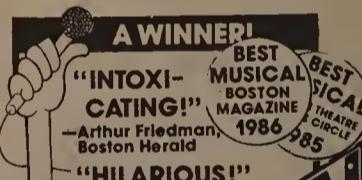
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Lesbian Sees Both Sides of Nicaragua's Process

Letters from Nicaragua

Rebecca Gordon

Spinsters/Aunt Lute, San Francisco, 1986

\$7.95 paper, 244 pp.

Reviewed by Lastenia Castellanos

As a Central American leftist lesbian, I am constantly looking for material which addresses any of the multiple facets of my identity. Recently, I read Rebecca Gordon's *Letters from Nicaragua* which reflects my impressions of lesbianism and women in pre-revolutionary and revolutionary Central America. The following review is seen through the perspective of someone trying to bring together her lesbian identity and her struggle to "fit" in the Central American left, a group of people who are struggling to change economic and social structures, but who do not necessarily include gay and lesbian rights.

Gordon's collection of letters to her lover and other friends were written from Nicaragua, where she lived for six months as a Witness for Peace volunteer. While her book does give detailed information about what was happening in each town she visited, and talks about women and lesbians in Nicaragua, it is not solely a discussion of these two topics. Rather, it is a combination of these, as well as many other things—a portrayal of the Nicaraguan revolution through the eyes of a North American lesbian feminist.

Rebecca's initial letters, and one or two responses from her lover, talk about why she has gone to Nicaragua and what she aims to discover there. Rebecca is aware that she has gone to Nicaragua to learn, to do something for herself that will enhance her political understanding, and not because she has something special to give the Nicaraguans. By the end, it becomes clear that her contribution to the revolution will be not only the work she will be able to do after gaining a better understanding of the revolutionary process; she will also have exposed Nicaraguans and North Americans in the solidarity and non-intervention movements to people like herself, a Jewish feminist lesbian. Rebecca's questions about Nicaragua include: "What is the revolution all about and what is it for women in particular?" "Is it possible to be a lesbian and a revolutionary?" "Can one get birth control?" "Is abortion available?"

I have often tried to explain to my North American lesbian friends that when I was growing up in Central America (up to age 17), it never occurred to me that I could be a lesbian. It wasn't an alternative. My only exposure to homosexuality was a number of effeminate gay men who worked as hair stylists, who did not talk about their lifestyle and who were ridiculed by the whole town. As a lesbian involved in the non-intervention movement and in the liberation struggle in Central America, I have often thought about what is needed before a woman can think of herself as woman or as a lesbian. My conclusion has been that there need to be a number of material prerequisites before this happens. Rebecca and her lover Jan talk about this.

Jan addresses Rebecca's question "Are there lesbians in Nicaragua?":

...of course there are lesbians in Nicaragua. There are always lesbians or rather, there are always strong, self-directed women who are drawn to loving those who will return their love both passionately and respectfully. Under our variant of patriarchy, "respectfully" tends to mean that their lovers will also be women. But that doesn't mean that lesbians everywhere will look or think like lesbians here. Nor does it mean that strong, self-directed women are always lesbians. It does imply, however, that there will be more lesbians when the cultural context permits (or even suggests) lesbianism. And that is probably not the case in Nicaragua...

Rebecca, after a few months in Nicaragua, writes: I don't doubt that there are women in most cultures, including Nicaragua, who have close emotional and even, when it is possible, sexual connections with other women. But I am not convinced that every woman who has such connections is what we in the United States would call a lesbian. The existence of lesbianism as a cultural identity requires some material prerequisites—a certain level of consumption and urbanization. When, for example, people are living ten to a two-room house, sexuality can't mean what it does for people who have some possibility of privacy in lovemaking. When all personal efforts are directed toward simple survival, it doesn't make sense to ask, "Where are the lesbians?"

Lesbian and gay identities as we know them in the U.S. and Europe are actually a relatively recent historical phenomenon. In saying that homosexual or

gay identity is a recent, culturally conditioned phenomenon, I do not mean that lesbians and gay men are not real. I am very deeply a lesbian, and concealing that fact hurt me deeply. But I am able to be a lesbian precisely because such a thing existed in the time and place where I was born. Homosexual identity simply does not exist in the same way in rural Latin America. Where it does exist in Latin American cities, it is usually as a cultural import from Europe and the United States. This places homosexuality in a genuinely mixed bag of other cultural imports—from tractors to dictatorships—to which Latin Americans understandably have mixed reactions.

To a certain extent, Nicaragua's revolution belongs to all Central Americans who dream of and struggle for a future when the other Central American countries can also go through a revolutionary transformation. Because of this, I have paid attention to the changes which have occurred in Nicaragua, and have tried to find an

Nicaraguan men and women lived in an extremely male-oriented and sexist society which will not change right away. In one of her conversations with a young Nicaraguan man, Rebecca tried to explain her understanding of these customs. "I was able to talk a little about the idea that a custom might be a genuine custom and still a bad thing," she writes.

In a brief but engaging conversation that I had with Rebecca, we talked about these laws. I mentioned that while I understand how, little by little, these laws would change the lives of women and allow women to begin to raise other issues related to their women-identities, I felt excluded since most of them were geared to better the lives of mothers. Rebecca smiled sympathetically and said, "But remember most women in Nicaragua are mothers." She was right, and it gave me a new perspective. I hope that the girls who are growing up today in revolutionary Nicaragua do not feel that they have to be mothers. An encouraging sign is that in the past two years AMNLAE, the Nicaraguan women's organization, has broadened its focus to include proposals which address issues of particular concern to women and not only the role of women in the revolutionary process.

There has been a tendency among most people who visit Nicaragua to conclude either that everything is perfect or everything is wrong. Rebecca's long stay in the country gave her the opportunity to appreciate the good aspects and to criticize the wrong aspects, and in between she found a lot of grey areas. Throughout her book, Rebecca relates different aspects of Nicaraguan women's lives and their thinking. Her writings are a mixture of joyful responses to and sharp questioning of the various experiences which she had. She relates the excitement of reading about the existence and location of the clitoris in *Somos*, AMNLAE's monthly magazine, and of witnessing that women, through their work in cooperatives, "develop skills and confidence which made them better able to participate in the political life of the whole community."

But the continuing struggle for full acknowledgement of women's role in the new society was reflected in an AMNLAE event where the emcee and one of the two speakers were men. Rebecca reflects, "It sometimes feels as if the greatest contribution a woman can make to the revolution is to be a mother of a Héroe or a Martyr." Rebecca consistently finds herself feeling either a part of a revolutionary process that gives her a sense of freedom, be it working together to save all the grains from a silo that was destroyed by the contras or taking a turn with *la vigilancia* when they are expecting a contra attack, or feeling isolated in her perspective. Her sense of being different is clearly articulated when she compares herself to her working comrades:

Claudia and Joaquin were saying today how they feel freer here than anywhere else they've ever been. For me it's a little more complicated. I still lower my voice when I tell some North American the name of the paper you and I publish (*Lesbian Contradiction*). And I've never come out to a Nicaraguan.

She realizes that "women still must work out a balance today, in Nicaragua as elsewhere, between justice for their people and justice for themselves as women." At the end of her book, Rebecca deals with her question, "Does Socialism liberate women in Nicaragua?" Her answer is yes and no:

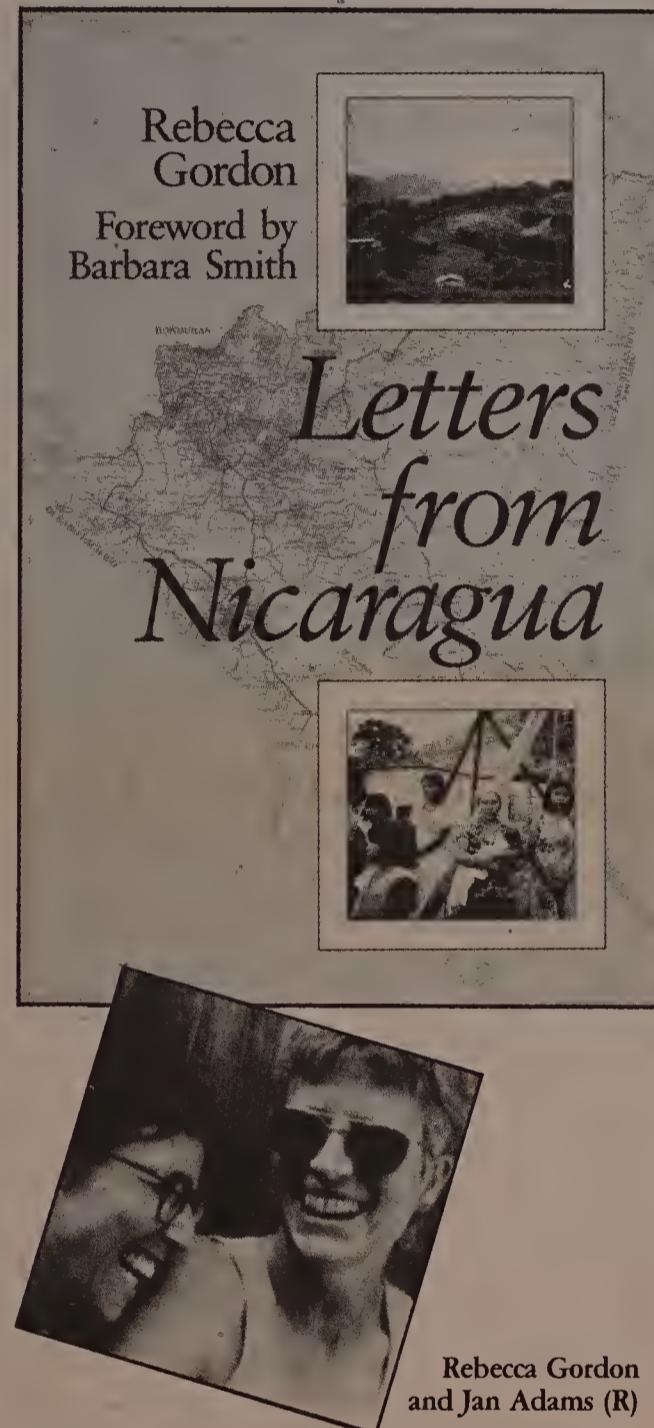
"What I saw in Nicaragua is that a genuine revolution turns traditional power relations upside down, and throws traditional beliefs about the nature of the world and human beings open to question. When a whole society is awakening, anything can happen. I can certainly imagine no more promising time for women to demand justice in Nicaragua than now, in the context of the political, economic and social revolution Nicaragua is making."

She adds, "Six months in Nicaragua left me as convinced as ever of women's need for an autonomous feminism." She, like myself and some of the Nicaraguan women she talked to, feels that the struggle for women's rights is a prolonged war.

On the last page of her book, Rebecca talks about the kind of pain I experience too often in my encounters with many of my leftist Central American *companeros*.

There comes a moment when you realize that for your *companeros*, liberation of "the people" was somehow never meant to include liberation of the women within that people. You find yourself forced to defend justice to the very people beside whom you've been struggling for justice. Inevitably, you're accused, at best, of irrelevance; at worst, of betrayal.

Letters from Nicaragua is about all this and much more. Any lesbian or gay man who is seeking to understand the Nicaraguan revolution should read it. I have bought a number of copies to distribute among my *companeros* of struggle.



Rebecca Gordon
and Jan Adams (R)

explanation for the things which are not happening. Being an "insider" has allowed me to take into account the history and cultural context in which this revolution is taking place. Being also somewhat of an "outsider," as a lesbian living in the United States, has given me a variety of perspectives from which to analyze the Sandinista revolution.

In relation to how the revolution has improved the lives of women, I have concluded some of the same things that Rebecca Gordon found in her trip. Laws have been passed which show a definite will to better women's lives, but that does not necessarily mean that these laws are being applied or that they will change the way of life or customs of a country immediately. Rebecca addresses some of these laws and their problems in several sections of her book. Only therapeutic abortions are permitted in Nicaragua and the pregnant woman's husband must request it. This excludes unmarried women. Her friend Chilo, in Jalapa, talks about how there is a broad consensus among women that they want birth control, but "the only problem," she says, "is getting hold of the stuff!"

Fathers' abandonment of their children is one of the top problems, and while the law of family responsibility is supposed to address that issue, Rebecca found that it is hard to enforce. "Many women, for example, are afraid to enforce the family support law, for fear that men will require domestic or sexual services from them, in return for paying child support." Likewise, during wartime, "soldiers have a tendency to beget children and move on." The main thing working against these laws, however, appears to be the fact that for centuries

Graphic Argument for Open Sexual Discourse

Caught Looking: Feminism, Pornography, and Censorship

The F.A.C.T. Book Committee
Caught Looking, Inc., New York, 1986
\$10 paper, 96 pp.

Reviewed by Ellen Herman

Looking. Taking. Wanting. Creating. It seems that acting is still as difficult and controversial for women as it ever was, including among feminists. *Caught Looking*, a magazine format book produced by the Feminist Anti-Censorship Task Force, proves that this controversy is alive and well in this supposedly "post-feminist" decade. Although it includes little new material, the articles reprinted in this sourcebook represent the critique of anti-pornography theory and strategy that has developed since the early 1980s. Ellen Willis' "Feminism, Moralism, and Pornography" (first published in *The Village Voice*) explored, in 1979, themes which became virtual metaphors for female experience in the debate that followed: victimization vs. rebellion, degradation vs. adventure.

New material in *Caught Looking* includes a useful chronology, from 1966 through 1985, of feminist attention to issues of sexuality, media and violence issues, compiled by Nan Hunter, and "Sex Premises" by Barbara O'Dair and Abby Tallmer, which aims to promote direct discussion about sexuality by naming 73 assumptions which have informed feminist writing on pornography.

On the other hand, *Caught Looking* is more than simply another document of feminist nastiness on the subject of pornography. It is itself a visual product, self-consciously designed so that readers actively confront pornography. This means looking at sexual images directly as well as absorbing ideas about them in indirect, written form.

In spite of its boldness in tackling visual images, the text is uninterestingly designed and, in the copy they sent *GCN*, text references are left incomplete. Having worked on many books myself, I know what it takes to create them, and usually find criticisms of this sort silly. I was disappointed by this oversight in *Caught Looking* though, because the book seemed to offer such a great opportunity to challenge the word/image dichotomy evident in so much political writing.

Nevertheless, the book's designers have taken on the ambitious task of answering the question, "What is pornography?" and have created a chronological documentation of visual porn, beginning with a photograph from the 1890s and ending with more contemporary images. At the start of the book, a "Designers' Statement" makes an important observation: for some readers, *Caught Looking* will be an initiation. The truth is that sexually explicit images are a new experience for many women, and looking is itself a controversial act of power.

Take me, for instance. I have kept up with the feminist debate about pornography almost entirely by reading and talking — using words, not visual images. Years ago, when I was in the Boston chapter of Woman Against Violence Against Women, we considered organizing tours of Boston's Combat Zone, and took an afternoon off from discussing to look — in adult bookstores and peep shows. (Women Against Pornography in New York began doing tours on 42nd Street in 1980; in Boston, we decided against them.) Since then, I have hardly peeked.

The real controversy, of course, does not end with whether women should look or not look. Pornography exists, after all, to be used, actively, for the sexual pleasure of the consumer. I realized, as I surveyed the images in *Caught Looking*, that I found the explicit pictures very clinical and cold, the less explicit ones much sexier. Women in this culture have simply not been given permission to use explicit sexual images as one technique for sexual arousal. (Non-graphic images or forms that leave more to the imagination, however — like gothic romances — have always been used as the raw material of female sexual fantasy.)

Pornography's function is one of the important

things that feminists are disputing: in other words, whether it is a good thing for women to use sexually explicit images actively, to turn themselves and their sexual partners on. This disagreement goes beyond differing opinions about the political meaning of pornographic content. (Actually, there seems to be rather a lot of agreement that pornography, as it currently exists, is overwhelmingly sexist since it is created by men for male consumption.) "What is pornography?" may be the first question, but another is: "Is there anything intrinsically objectionable in a direct sexual gaze?"

Basic questions about human sexuality are what the pornography debaters have been tiptoeing around all this time. Is sexual desire satiable or is it an addiction

to universalizing the victimization metaphor, equating male sexuality with brutality, and making it impossible to see women as positive actors in any realm, especially the sexual.

In the past several years a variety of people in this country have become interested in actively censoring feminist (and other critical) voices. *Caught Looking* is very much a product of this context. It and the other important forums from which articles were reprinted, are evidence that cultural space is necessary if we are going to fight about pornography, or anything else. It should be obvious, but apparently is not, that progressive movements benefit from expanding the cultural space in which critical ideas can thrive. There must be more, not less, support for feminist writing critical of pornography, books like *Caught Looking*, and everything else that we have to say.

On the cover of *Caught Looking* is a sexy Belgian/French photograph from the 1920s of a woman reading. In these days of book-banning, this photograph says a great deal. Publishing, making movies, creating erotic images — not censoring them — are the actions that will protect the future of feminist culture and dialogue. And this includes a future of acting in the interest of sexual safety and freedom from male violence.

If your local bookstore doesn't carry *Caught Looking*, you can get it from *Caught Looking, Inc.*, 135 Rivington St., New York, NY 10002. Include an extra \$2 for postage, etc.



"Lace Bondage"

to be managed, and is the answer different for men than for women? Is it possible for women to be sexual risk-takers without being sexual victims? Can heterosexuality, in any form, be a non-oppressive choice for women? Could it be that we remain embarrassed about pornography's very purpose — sexual arousal?

Moving from individual psychology to movement politics, a number of articles speculate that feminist anti-pornography activity has, ironically, represented an attempt to take collective action and resist demoralization in a cultural atmosphere that has pronounced the women's movement and its reforms — the ERA, abortion rights, and affirmative action, to name just a few — permanently inactive (i.e. dead).

Ann Snitow's "Retrenchment vs. Transformation" argues that, as in 19th century "purity crusades," the popular appeal of pornography has come to represent feminist impotence even while organizing against it seems to offer revitalization. Paula Webster's "Pornography and Pleasure," (first published in *Heresies 12: The Sex Issue*) as well as "I'm Black and Blue from the Rolling Stones and I'm Not Sure How I Feel About It" by Kate Ellis (which first appeared in *Socialist Review*), explore how feminists redefined sexual material as violent. This redefinition offset a growing feeling of feminist defeat by allowing women to express their outrage at a clear target: the male equation between sex and violence.

One persuasive explanation offered by the editors for the insistence on victimization as an overwhelming metaphor for female experience traces the roots of the anti-pornography movement to struggles against rape and battering.

We believe that frustration engendered by two decades of working against the most egregious expression of sexism, male violence against women, has led many women, often unfamiliar with pornography... to scapegoat sexual images. ("Introduction," p.6)

Staffing battered women's shelters and rape crisis centers is work on sexism's front lines, and I have often thought that women who do this work should be periodically rotated out of it, precisely because confronting the reality of male violence is so difficult. I do not think that it diminishes the seriousness of sexist violence or the importance of eliminating it to point out that anti-violence work can, over time, contribute

Bosie and the Danger Queen

Lord Alfred Douglas

H. Montgomery Hyde
Dodd, Mead and Company, New York, 1985
\$19.95 cloth, 366 pp.

Oscar Wilde: an illustrated biography

Martin Fido
Peter Bedrick Books/Harper and Row, New York, 1985
\$9.95 paper, 144 pp.

More Letters of Oscar Wilde

Rupert Hart-Davis, editor
The Vanguard Press, New York, 1985

Reviewed by Duncan Mitchel

On the day that we stand before the Goddess to give account of our lives, Oscar Wilde will have a lot to answer for. He was the centerpiece of probably the biggest homosexual scandal in modern Western history. While the severity of his punishment — 2 years at hard labor — won some sympathy for homosexuals generally and for him in particular, it also scared uncounted English gay men deeply into their closets for years afterward. He reinforced the association of male homosexuality with a sickly, gilded aestheticism which collected and mounted sins like dried butterflies — and Wilde never seriously challenged the idea that diddling boys was sin. (He could have. Walt Whitman's poetry is free of the taint, and it was earlier than Wilde's work; Wilde had even met Whitman.) Numerous writers have suggested that it was this sense of sin that led Wilde into the disastrous libel suit against the Marquess of Queensbury which backfired and sent him to Reading Gaol. This may well be true. Wilde was clearly a danger queen, as can be seen from his fondness for "feasting with panthers" (i.e., consorting with blackmailers). But his personal pathology is of interest mainly as it relates to his pernicious and long-lived influence on other gay men's lives and art.

Continued on Book Review page 7

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GCN BOOK REVIEW

Blackbird Sings but LoveSex Sucks to No Avail

Blackbird

Larry Duplechan
St. Martin's Press, New York, 1986
\$13.95, 182 pp.

Naked to the Night

K.B. Raul
Gay Sunshine Press, San Francisco, 1986
\$7.95 paper, 173 pp.

Lovesex

Max Exander
Alyson Publications, Boston, 1986
\$6.95 paper, 108 pp.

Reviewed by Michael Bronski

Twenty years ago there were so few "gay" books available that the common homosexual reader cherished each and every one. (Many times against her or his better judgment.) Ten years ago there were enough books on gay themes being published that one had the privilege to pick and choose, as well as the freedom to disregard inferior, or just plain dumb, titles. Now as gay publishing — both mainstream and small press — releases a fair number of books each year (although still minuscule compared to the rest of the industry) readers not only have more wheat but a good deal more chaff to sort through.

I read most of the gay fiction that comes out: a mixed bag ranging from horrible junk, to interesting junk, to well-intentioned, to pretty good, to great. As with all publishing, most of it is middling. The problem is that there are so few great books: books that make you sit up and laugh or cry or move you in any way, books that sound like they had been written by someone who has something to say and a voice with which to say it. So many books read as though they had been written by a computer that to find a book with personality and a character is a joy. *Blackbird* by Larry Duplechan is this sort of book.

It's hard to pinpoint why *Blackbird* is so good. Part of the reason is that Duplechan is quite modest in his story's scope and intent. The plot takes a few weeks in the life of Johnnie Ray Rousseau — a gay, Black, high school student in Southern California — as he comes to grips with his sexuality and with the realization that growing up means having to deal with a very real, sometimes quite dangerous world where the only person you can really trust is yourself and your instincts.

On one level *Blackbird* is related to all of those with-it-contemporary-young adult novels *a la* Judy Blume that discuss such "important" topics as drugs, sex and not loving your parents enough. And certainly *Blackbird* has its fill of these sympathetic teen-angst *roman* themes: homosexuality, teen pregnancy, teen suicide, queer bashing, child abuse, birth control, as well as a hint of ESP and some fraudulent exorcism to boot. But with all of these top heavy ideas, *Blackbird* has a lightness and a vivacity which saves it from sinking into the sewer of psycho-babble realism. The main theme of *Blackbird* is the survival of Johnnie Ray Rousseau — the book's title is a reference to both him and the Beatle song from *The White Album* — and Duplechan writes in such a way that both Johnnie Ray and the reader come out singing.

If Duplechan's plotting is simple, his use of language is simply glorious. The whole novel is narrated by Johnnie Ray and you'd be hard pressed to find another book with such a fresh, startling and energetic voice: certainly *Rubyfruit Jungle*, and maybe Larry Mitchell's *The Terminal Bar* but these are few and far between. What is great about the writing here is not just that it makes for a consistently good read — and it does — but that is also has resonance and depth, as well as feeling and grace.

The story takes place in the early '70s and Johnnie Ray is a young queen obsessed with popular culture. He wants to be a singer and knows pop songs in and out, from the '50s crooning of his namesake to the balladeering of Joni Mitchell. He also watches movies all the time and more than anything else uses them to inform and chart his life. After seeing *Song of Bernadette* with Jennifer Jones he even tries converting to Roman Catholicism; when he finally becomes involved with his first affair, he flirts like Barbara Stanwyck, teases like Bette Davis and makes love like Rita Hayworth.

Other novels, particularly *The Movie Lover* by Richard Friedel, have tried to capture the connection between pop/camp culture and some gay men. They almost all succeed on a superficial level — how could they fail with all those great lines — but *Blackbird* aims for and hits at a deeper level. Johnnie Ray is not posing and posturing with these actresses and their movies to

hide his feelings; he is using them to express and to create his own life — a life that is quite removed from the humdrum heterosexual concerns of his staid, middle class Baptist parents and the empty-headed, suburban-bland high school he attends. Duplechan knows that this queen chatter, gayboy fantasy world is not real and Johnnie learns that in the real world Romeo and Juliet die, Rita Hayworth does not always get to keep the man, and that there may be real pain when the screen fades to black. Duplechan uses his large vocabulary of pop culture with style, but as opposed to other writers, he knows that substance lies elsewhere.

To compare *Blackbird* to the typical young adult novel does it a disservice, for while many of these books "deal with" sexuality in the most acceptable way, *Blackbird* does not stint its readers on the details of Johnnie Ray's fantasy and actual sexual exploits. (It's the sort of book that should be mandatory reading for high school students but would never be assigned.) Duplechan's sex descriptions are never morose and

The standards of what readers will accept, even for books which are clearly not to be taken seriously, has declined drastically in the past 20 years.

Since so many of the new novels published by the gay presses are less than exciting, the re-release of an old classic is always welcomed. Perhaps *Gay Sunshine* will also bring out Raul's 1968 novel, *A Hidden Hunger*, as well as some of the other pulps which have been totally unavailable since their publication.

Max Exander has been writing for the gay male skin mags for the last several years. *Gay Sunshine* published a collection of his better stories, *Mansex*, a year-and-a-half ago and then Alyson Publications brought out a safe sex porn novel, *Safestud*, last year. *Safestud* was a porno/bildungsroman charting Max's voyage into the pleasures of safe sex. After having fucked his brains out in *Safestud* Max now discovers that he can have safe sex and love in *Lovesex*.

The stories in *Mansex* were good and hot. Mostly taken from *Honcho*, *Mandate*, and *Numbers*, they were not concerned with safe sex but rather s/m — a great deal of which is safe sex anyway. Clearly *Safestud* is an energetic response to the AIDS crisis and a real attempt to make porn both sexually exciting and pedagogical. There is nothing wrong and certainly much which is laudable about this approach, and Exander has found ways to take the combination of the two more palatable. By casting both *Safestud* and *Lovesex* in the form of journals which show Max's development, Exander is able to introduce a first person narrator who can make comments unobtrusively. And no one can complain that there isn't enough sex — Max and his friends do almost everything, and then some — all safe. The problem is that the books are just not very sexy.

Exander's voice in *Mansex* is urgent: he is hot to trot and the prose is sharp, lean and hungry. The journal format of *Safestud* and *Lovesex* are by necessity — of both the form and the purpose — reflective. Although there is a lot of sex, Max is always coming in at the end to tell us how he feels or what he has learned or what we should learn. Take this entry from *Lovesex*:

November 17, 1984: It's Saturday. We've just fucked, and I love him. It's raining and cold, but here in bed I'm safe. Love can be a refuge. I've learned something: Relationships have absolutely nothing to do with fate. If your dick gets hard and your eyes misty that's enough. The rest is effort.

You may think this is true or you may not, but it is certainly not very interesting. I suspect that Exander was trying to write porn and combine it with the classic "instructional" literature of the 17th century. Unfortunately he is no La Rochefoucauld or Madame de Sevigne, too many of his observations are self-satisfied and feel smarmy: they are all earnestness and no wit. Even the sex here — especially as compared to *Mansex* is slack and flaccid; it is descriptive but has little energy. Part of the confusion here is that *Lovesex* and *Safestud* are not really pornography. They are sexually descriptive and, for some, may be sexually exciting, but they are — by intention — contemplative and instructive. And while these are fine things for a book to want to be, a reader looking for the hot and heavy fornication and exaltation of *Mansex* will be disappointed.



lead, nor are they coy and cute: honesty precludes affect here and the writing is simple and clean.

For all of its good points *Blackbird* does have some faults, the ESP sub-plot (it's actually more a leitmotif) does not quite work and the religious exorcism at the book's end, although thematically on target, seems excessive and somewhat silly. But with the exceptions, *Blackbird* is a fine piece of fiction. It should also be noted — and praised — for being one of the few books, from small or mainstream publishers which is by a Black man and deals with the Black gay experience. In a world of books written by rote, to sell to people who buy cover art, *Blackbird* is a daring and refreshing exception.

Naked to the Night by K.B. Raul has just been released by Gay Sunshine Press. Originally published in 1964 as a pulp paperback, *Naked to the Night* is not a bad read. Clearly taking its inspiration from John Rechy's *City of Night* — which had been published the year before — *Naked to the Night* tells the story of Rick Talbot who is hung like a horse and has an unmatched physical beauty. Rick leaves Iowa and comes to find his fortune in the big city, only to become a hustler. After many adventures — if the book has other progenitors they are Horatio Alger's luck-and-pluck boys books — he finally finds a man to love, a job he likes (he becomes a movie star), and most importantly, he learns to accept himself.

Although *Naked to the Night* was a rather routine paperback original when it was published (except, of course, for the queerly happy ending) it reads well. The plot may be obvious and expectable but Raul's writing and characters have liveliness and depth not usually found in the pulps. It is amazing what passes for trash writing now, as compared to then: *Naked to the Night* was bus station book rack, exploitation junk and yet it is infinitely more literate and readable than the newly published novels of Judith Krantz or Dianelle Steele.

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Book Shorts

Beyond Happiness

Peter McGehee
Stubblejumper Press, Toronto, 1985
\$7 paper, 85 pp.

This is an utterly delightful little novella. Subtitled "The Intimate Memoirs of Billy Lee Belle," *Beyond Happiness* is the picaresque tale of growing up gay in a stiflingly close-knit Southern family, quitting college just before graduation to follow an ill-fated affair to San Francisco, and finally finding true love in the arms of a man from Saskatoon.

The protagonist's early life was spent in dealing with the family and with the vicissitudes of being a sissy boy in Little Rock. At the beginning he declares:

Mother Dear has lived a life plagued with misery.... Naturally, she wanted for her children what she had failed to find, in short, happiness. She made it her special mission to do everything within her power to eradicate any obstacles she might perceive to stand in the way of that goal. These included sex, aside from the missionary position which was beautiful, communism, and the wonderful world of entertainment.

As a six-year-old who preferred dolls to sports, and discussion to fighting, Billy Lee was taken to see a psychiatrist who had him close his eyes, feel objects and describe them — a pointless exercise that nevertheless made its way into his sexual fantasies that night.

When he asked his mother the purpose of the visit she told him, "I am just seeing after your happiness, dear." Trying to reason with her that he was already happy was futile.



Elmer Egan

Later he came to the conclusion that his carefree alcoholic Aunt Suzy was the only member of the family who was truly happy, after watching her tell off their pompous matriarch Aunt Tula at Thanksgiving dinner. After so informing his mother, he was again packed off to the psychiatrist — which convinced him that "happiness lay far beyond her obsessive concerns, and I intended to find out where."

The rest of the book is a series of vignettes narrating Billy Lee's progress in transcending his suffocating upbringing. In the end, his mother finally admits her own unhappiness in the face of his contentment. Most of the

episodes are absolutely uproarious. My only complaint is that it is such a short book. The copyright page mentions that *Beyond Happiness* was originally a theater production. That I wish I had seen. Hopefully we will be seeing more works by Peter McGehee. — John Kyper

Beyond Happiness can be ordered for \$7 plus \$1 per copy for handling, from Stubblejumper Press, Box 1203, Station F, Toronto, ON, Canada M4Y 2V8.

The Pearls

Shelley Smith
Naiad Press, Tallahassee, 1987
\$7.95 paper, 172 pp.

Secret agents... Espionage... Mystery and excitement. Forget John LeCarre's cold, dirty little world of blackmail and betrayal. If you ever secretly suspected that secret agents really do lead glamourous, adventurous — and yes, romantic — lives, you're absolutely right! At least according to author Shelley Smith and her two intrepid junior agents, Bunny Silver and Harriet Pearl.

Bunny and Harriet (after suffering years of sexist discrimination) are finally given an exciting assignment — to investigate the mysterious goings-on on the mythical Caribbean island of Los Pagos. BUT they must travel as "Mr. and Mrs. Harry Pearl." Amusing identity crises abound — but first, they have to go to all the couturier salons in New York, and a few

of the better restaurants. Our heroines are definitely interested in fashion. Then it's on to Los Pagos, where Maria Hosada, the local dictator's wife, is definitely interested in "Harry." To no one's surprise but her own, so is Bunny.

Yes, this book is predictable, but it's also amusing. It keeps the reader's interest and the plot (such as it is) flows well. After all, "War and Peace" we are not expecting here. But character development is scanty. This is the first lesbian sexual experience for both women. Does neither one pause, draw back, wonder what Mother would say? They experience exactly the same emotion when they buy designer clothing for the first time — an exciting new thrill, but nothing to question or even think about. (Raise your hands, all real humans who can say that.) The characters have no lives outside of the scenes portrayed.

As for the spying, it's clear who wears the white hats and who the black. Ultimately, Goodness, Women and the American Way triumph. (Yes, all of them. Radical anarchists, these women ain't.) But how, exactly, is semi-democracy going to be better than — or even different from — the prevailing benevolent dictatorship? Does anyone want it to be? Does anyone care?

The Pearls is a good book to read on a long trip — or if you wish you were going on a trip. It could easily be turned into a Movie of the Week, and would be fun to watch. But if you're not going to be home, don't bother taping it.

—Jan R. Fielding

Us in the Eyes of Them: A Survey of the Mainstream Press

The past few years have seen not only a swelling of small gay presses but an outpouring of gay — and gay related — books from the mainstream. A very mixed bag, here are some quick notes on what to watch — or watch out for.

Biography and autobiography have always been popular gay readings: who is out and who is closeted usually rank high on the interest scale. *Half Laughing/Half Crying: Songs for Myself* by Malcolm Boyd (St. Martin's Press, \$15.95) is described as a "spiritual autobiography" and while he is no St. Teresa the book is an interesting overlook at Boyd's career from Hollywood to an out, political Episcopalian minister. On the other end of the spectrum is John Waters' collection of autobiographical and artistic essays *Crackpot* (Macmillan, \$14.95). People who love Waters' grossout movies will enjoy the book, although most of it is rather thoughtful commentary on both the man, his work and popular culture. Others may be upset by his flippant and cavalier attitude toward more serious political and moral questions.

John Malcolm Brinnin's *Truman Capote: Dear Heart, Old Buddy* (Delacourt, \$16.95) is a revision and enlargement of the chapter on Capote in his earlier book *Sextet*. An affectionate portrait of his friend, Capote has few hard edges and while never overtly sentimental, it does present a romanticized view of the man and his work. May Sarton, *A Self-Portrait* (Norton, \$9.95) is a transcript of the film of the same name released several years ago. Sarton answers questions about her life and her work and while there is little new material here for those who have read her journals and poems, it is a brief and eloquent summation, or introduction to the woman. There is also a small selection of poems included.

Gifford Lewis's *Somerville and Ross: The World of the Irish R.M.* (Viking, \$19.95) is a look at the lives of Edith Somerville and Violet Martin (aka Martin Ross), two Irish cousins and most probably lovers, who

became famous for their portraits of Irish country life. (Their most famous work *The Irish R.M.* recently appeared on PBS.) Lewis avoids sexuality — she refers to "their sisterly love" — but there is more here about them and their world than you will find anywhere else. Worthwhile reading especially if it spurs more interest in their lives and work.

Although written as a novel Pier Paolo Pasolini's *A Violent Life* (Carcanet, \$7.50) contains a great deal of autobiography. A brutal look at street life and loves in post-war Italy, it is a searing picture of poverty and sexuality written by one of the geniuses of modern Italian writing and filmmaking. Don Carpenter's *The Dispossessed* (North Point, \$15.95) is also about street life but this time in a small Californian town. Ostensibly about a murder, the novel is really concerned with the erosion of trust and faith that can occur in any social group. Carpenter is best at describing character and there are several gay ones here.

A great reprint, just reissued, is Joanna Russ's classic *The Female Man* (Beacon, \$7.95). Published more than 10 years ago Russ's juxtaposition of s/f, fantasy and feminism is still mind-boggling today. Also mind-boggling is Jane Wagner's *The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe* (Harper and Row, \$15.95). Fully illustrated with pictures of Lily Tomlin performing the script — in and out of costume — *Search* is a great remembrance of the show, or if you missed it, a wonderful introduction.

If Wagner's view of American culture is ultimately upbeat, feminist and poet Louise Bernikow's *Alone in America: The Search for Companionship* (Harper and Row, \$15.95) is on the downbeat side. Pop-sociology with a lyric bent, *Alone* looks at the range of "loneliness" in U.S. society with a good section of the book given over to the concerns of gay people and women. John Costello's *Virtue Under Fire* (Little, Brown \$17.95) deals with the changes in our social and sexual attitudes caused by World War II. The topic is

fascinating and Costello makes some good stabs at covering it, but the book feels lightweight and has no index. Gay men, and to a small degree, lesbians, do figure into his history, but it will take the work of a gay historian to do the subject justice.

Gay diarist Donald Vining, while not a historian, has written a small series of thoughts on gay life and relationships entitled *How Can You Come Out When You've Never Been In?* (Crossing Press, \$6.95). This is lightweight material but interesting, especially if you liked any of the Vining *Gay Diaries*. Both personal and historical is Adrienne Rich's classic *Of Woman Born*, just reprinted (Norton, \$7.95) with a new forward for the 10th anniversary edition. As an overview and analysis of women and mothering, *Of Woman Born* is an important work.

Less history and more psychology and social science are three titles from Harrington Park Press all at \$8.95: *Two Lives to Live: Bisexuality in Men and Women* edited by Fritz Klein, *Gay Personality and Sexual Labeling* edited by John De Cecco, and *The Many Faces of Homosexuality: Anthropological Approaches to Homosexual Behavior* edited by Evelyn Blackwood. All are solid additions to the scientific literature, although clearly intended for the scholarly rather than the popular audience.

AIDS has come into the forefront of the publishing racket and more and more books are pouring off the presses than ever before. The problem is that accurate information changes every day and theories, many of which are crackpot, flourish like germs in a Petri dish. Feldman and Johnson's *The Social Dimension of AIDS* (Prager, \$37.95) is a series of papers and essays on the impact of AIDS on the medical establishment and social organization. Highly theoretical, many of the pieces seem outdated and obsolete now. Gail Baumgartner's *AIDS: Psychosexual Factors in the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome* (Charles C. Thomas, \$15) is of some interest since it deals with a small group

of gay men with AIDS and examines how their lives and perceptions have changed. She also examines the effect their disease has upon doctors, nurses and social workers. It is a formal study, but well suited to a large readership.

What to do About AIDS: Physicians and Mental Health Professionals Discuss the Issue (U. of California, \$20) is a mixed collection; the medical material is outdated but the social work studies — especially those that deal with therapy for the dying — seem to have some merit. It is also more readable than most books of such studies. That is not true of Victor Gong's *AIDS: Facts and Issues* (Rutgers University Press, \$25). Although this edition has been updated, most of the medical info is, if not outdated, at least superseded by newer studies. The social work and psychological issues are very basic and, at this point in time, fairly obvious. But whatever faults can be found here are magnified in Graham Hancock and Enver Carin's *AIDS: The Deadly Epidemic* (Gollancz, \$7.95). Not only is the info outdated, but the book is laced with anti-sex innuendos and attitudes. Obnoxious. *Mobilizing Against AIDS* (written by a committee of scientists at the Institute of Medicine/National Academy of Sciences and published by Harvard University Press) is well written and although over a year old still contains some sensible ways of looking at AIDS. It is non-judgemental and level-headed in its approach, and although flawed, probably the best of the bunch.

Allan M. Brandt's insightful *No Magic Bullet* (Oxford, \$8.95) has just been reissued with a new chapter on AIDS. Brandt looks at the history of venereal disease in the U.S. and places it in a very clear, social context. The chapter on AIDS is by no means complete but raises some very good ways of looking at both the context and the mythology surrounding the syndrome.

— Michael Bronski

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Death and the Labyrinth, The World of Raymond Roussel

Michel Foucault

Translated by Charles Ruas
With and Introduction by John Ashbery
Doubleday, New York, 1986
\$15.95, 186 pp.

Published in France in 1963, *Death and the Labyrinth, The World of Raymond Roussel* resurfaces a nearly forgotten gay author and provides clues not only into Roussel's world but also into Foucault's. Roussel was born in 1877, wrote a series of cryptic poems, plays and novels which were either ridiculed, misunderstood or ignored; in 1933, he killed himself. A contemporary and acquaintance of both Proust and Cocteau, Roussel pursued a gay strategy which appealed to Foucault:

Between cryptography and sexuality as a secret, there is certainly a direct relationship. Let's take three examples: When Cocteau wrote his works, people said, "It's not surprising that he flaunts his sexuality and his sexual preferences with such ostentation since he is a homosexual." Then about Proust they said, "It's not surprising that he hides and reveals his sexuality, that he lets it appear clearly while also hiding it in his work, since he is a homosexual." And it could also be said about Roussel, "It's not surprising that he hides it completely since he is a homosexual." In other words, of the three possible modes of behavior — hiding it entirely, hiding it while revealing it, or flaunting it — all can appear as a result of sexuality, but I would say that it is related to a way of living. It's a choice in relation to what one is as a sexual being and also as a writer.

Beautifully and fluidly written, *Death and the Labyrinth, The World of Raymond Roussel* explores an extraordinary world, Roussel's Land of Oz or Wonderland. (Roussel's favorite book was Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, 1870.) The risk in reading Roussel comes from trying to translate him into another language, the rational one of academic and middle-class prose, straight complacencies. Here Foucault succeeds brilliantly in canvassing the labyrinth without destroying the fabric. As he explains, "There is no system common to

existence and to language, for a very simple reason: language alone forms the system of existence." Death, birth, change (ace of spades, spaces) sits in the heart of Roussel's (as of Foucault's) writings:

The labyrinth of time is folded back upon itself, and within this darkened heart its invisible brilliance shines for no one. That is the reason why birth is beyond language and at the heart of language. The words slowly return toward it, but can never reach it, since they are always a beginning and they are always a repetition.

Necessarily, Roussel comes to us with his words twenty thousand leagues under the sea; first Foucault's analysis: filter of one author to another; then the filter from one language to another. Neither translation can be perfect; for instance, both Foucault and Ruas miss a reference to dingleberries (the mats of shit and hair which form around the asshole); Foucault points out that *natte* (a braid a woman makes of her hair) associates with *à cul*. *À cul* should not, however, be translated "to the posterior!"

Raymond Roussel himself provided some clues for his posterity/posteriority. His *How I Wrote Certain of My Books* — an obvious echo of Nietzsche's "Why I Write Such Good Books" in his *Ecce Homo* — was published posthumously in 1935 and translated into English in 1977. There he gives an example of his composition:

Taking the word *palmier* I decided to consider it in two senses: as a *pastry* and as a *tree*. Considering it as a *pastry*, I searched for another word, itself having two meanings which could be linked to it by the preposition *à*; thus I obtained (and it was, I repeat, a long arduous task) *palmier* (a kind of *pastry*) *à restauration* (restaurant which serves pastries); the other part gave me *palmier* (palmtree) *à restauration* (restoration of a dynasty), which yielded the palmtree in Trophies Square commemorating the restoration of the Talou.

Death and the Labyrinth may not be the last word on Roussel but this work provides an unusual opening into Foucault's mind. Those who want to make him pedestrian should begin by reading this book. Like Gertrude Stein, Oscar Wilde, Djuna Barnes, Hart Crane — Foucault abjured the obvious, the straight line; his mind was circuited with multi-dimensional mobius strips; just when you think you've reached the fundament, the

end, you find a *cul-de-sac* beginning *à cul*. (To translate: stick a finger up your asshole and twist it in and out until you smile.)

— Charley Shiveley

The Love of Good Women

Isabel Miller

Naiad Press, Tallahassee, 1986

\$8.95 paper, 210 pp

Isabel Miller's recent novel *The Love of Good Women* concentrates on two women, Gertrude (later Trudi) and Milly. Gertrude's life is wholly devoted to pleasing her husband, Earl, and taking care of her house and children. Milly is Barney's wife; she's "different," hates housework and loves women. The story concerns the changes that occur in the women's lives because of World War II.

In the spring of 1942 Gertrude hears on the radio a plea for women to join the work force and help the war effort. She manages to get



Isabel Miller

Earl's approval (he wants the extra money) and gets a job on the night shift at a nearby factory. Through her contact with the tough, funny women she works with, she changes from a self-sacrificing, submissive, anxious housewife to a somewhat independent woman. The turning point comes when she finds a way to keep Earl from taking her paycheck.

Barney goes off to join the Navy, but before he goes, loving and understanding Milly, he finds Lil, one of "those" women (the word lesbian never appears in the book), to come to live with Milly and take care of the house and children. Milly runs the garage while Barney is away, and she and Lil soon become lovers. And it is Barney, when he returns safely, who arranges everything so that Trudi gets free from Earl, Milly and Lil can live together, and all their lives are happily re-arranged.

There are some obvious similarities

between this book and Miller's earlier, much loved novel *Patience and Sarah*, published in 1969. In both, the two main characters are women of different backgrounds and with quite dissimilar personalities, yet difficulties are overcome and lovers are together in the end. Both stories are told entirely from the perspective of the two characters, alternately. *Patience and Sarah* told their stories in the first person. *The Love of Good Women* is told in the third person, from the viewpoint and experiences of Milly and Gertrude alternately. The device works well for me in this book, better than it did in *Patience and Sarah*. Miller develops background by using flashbacks, and conversations are lively and full of individual styles, especially in the talk of the women in the factory. In both books the love scenes are tender, sexy and believable, more varied in this later book because of the greater number of characters.

Certain aspects of *The Love of Good Women* bothered and puzzled me. For me the central problem is Gertrude/Trudi. Her submissiveness and self-abasement, her adoration of Earl seem a little unbelievable and in a way unpleasant. During the first part of the book all her energy is focused on pleasing him and trying to figure out what he wants. She's an exaggeration of someone with no sense of self except as a subservient wife, a miserable wimp who blames herself for anything that goes wrong, too meek to be believable, too stupid to make the transformation Miller describes. But she isn't stupid in her work or later relationships.

Another of the novel's problems is that the main part of the story takes place during World War II, but there is little mention of it. The war gives the women their chance to earn their own living and takes it away at the end. Barney goes off to join the Navy and comes back unharmed in a resplendent uniform to solve everyone's problems. Otherwise the outside world hardly touches these characters.

These odd omissions don't matter much, as the people themselves and their wonderful conversations are engrossing and very natural. The women at the factory are full of talk, about men and work and sex and relationships. They like Trudi a lot; they protect and educate and encourage her to take charge of her life. Miller gives us, through their conversations, a clear understanding of the deep, caring relationship between Barney and Milly, and between Milly and Lil. The book is neither a feminist novel nor a lesbian story. Still, I had a fine time reading it.

— Buffy Dunker

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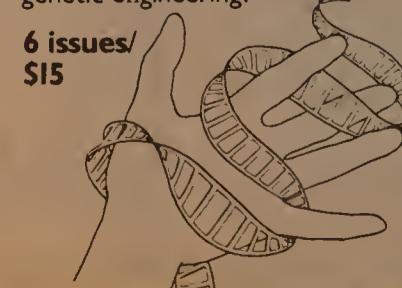
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Preferring Power: Dickinson through Her Poems

Emily Dickinson

Cynthia Griffin Wolff
Knopf, New York, 1986
\$25.00, 638 pp.

Reviewed by Robin Lippincott

Cynthia Griffin Wolff's important new work is the first major biography of Emily Dickinson to be written by a woman. Professor of the Humanities at M. I. T., Wolff is a fitting biographer for Dickinson, about whose external life so little is known. Author of another admirable biography of a woman writer, *A Feast of Words: The Triumph of Edith Wharton*, Wolff claims that the way to know Dickinson obviously cannot be through the external life, but through the interior, the poetry. So, as she did with the life of Edith Wharton, Wolff enters — with great care — the field of psychobiography, a leap that most often lands her gracefully on her feet. Indeed, Wolff's biography complements but also surpasses all preceding biographies of Emily Dickinson, including Richard Sewall's valuable 1974 two-volume work.

Emily Dickinson opens with an epigram, "The Lord's Prayer" ("For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory . . ."), followed by a quote from the poet in her thirty-ninth year: "When a little girl, I remember hearing that passage and preferring 'Power' . . .," a quote that reverberates throughout this rich, impressive book.

Wolff begins with a wide angle lens, slowly but gradually narrowing her focus until she settles on the poet. She goes to great lengths to establish the America and Amherst of the day, but most interesting is her inclusion of relatively new research into 19th century women's history. Wolff sketches the prevalence of death in women's lives at the time, whether through childbirth or by expected participation in rituals of death, including "watching" over the dying and dead. It is no wonder then that death was one of Dickinson's poetic preoccupations. "Herman Melville learned of bloody death and bloodier birth," Wolff writes, "by shipping out to sea. Emily Dickinson was constrained to consider such issues merely by having been born female."

Wolff soon zooms in on Dickinson's ancestry, her grandfather the grandiose but tragic Samuel Fowler Dickinson, and his son — Emily's father — the reactively conservative Edward. Wolff's portrait of

Edward Dickinson as an unemotional, lonely man with great hostility towards intellectual women is well-drawn, though not significantly different from that of previous biographers. What is new is the portrait of Dickinson's mother, Emily Norcross Dickinson, and the effect she had on her daughter. Whereas previous biographers have dismissed Mrs. Dickinson as an ineffectual housewife, and blames the "failure" of the Dickinson marriage on her, Wolff distributes the blame equally, and is more compassionate towards Mrs. Dickinson. Both, writes Wolff, were inept at dealing with emotions. And whereas Edward Dickinson was able to transfer all of his emotional energy into his work, Emily Norcross Dickinson had no such outlet. Wolff shows that during her courtship with Edward Dickinson, Emily Norcross became increasingly dissatisfied with her husband-to-be. Then, and throughout her life, she communicated only passively and indirectly. It is here that Wolff sees. Mrs. Dickinson's influence upon her daughter, claiming that it is from her mother that Emily Dickinson the poet learned her style of communication. "No other American poet," Wolff writes, "has understood so well the power of *withholding* communication." Thus, Wolff paints the barren emotional landscape into which Emily Dickinson was born, a landscape warmed somewhat by the lifelong closeness she had with her brother Austin and sister Lavinia. Wolff calls Dickinson's family life "a fortress of loneliness," and the family's failure of communication the source of Emily Dickinson's urgent need to write, her "fall into language."

Wolff's portrait of Emily Dickinson as an adult woman poet strongly echoes that of Adrienne Rich's in her superb essay "Vesuvius at Home: The Power of Emily Dickinson." Wolff writes that Dickinson's "command over words gave her the means to craft a uniquely powerful adult identity," an especially unusual feat for an unmarried woman of the time. Instead of the myth of the eccentric, "half-cracked" woman in white, the "Belle of Amherst," Wolff rightly sees a powerful genius of a woman who chose her seclusion as a simple, practical solution towards achieving the work she had to do. A fascinating sub-theme is Wolff's assertion that Dickinson valued visual over verbal communication, because of the early and apparent failure of verbal communication in her family. Admitting the sublime irony, and quoting from dozens of letters and poems, Wolff impressively supports this idea, extending it to Dickinson's later reclusiveness: "...she retains power as God does, by withholding face."

Emily Dickinson's struggle with God is the central paradigm of Wolff's biography. Throughout, and most pointedly in the chapter entitled "Pugilist and Poet," Wolff examines the poetry as the poet's rage and anger alternately portray God as cruel, vindictive, and as a rapist: "He fumbles at your Soul/ As Players at the Keys/ Before they drop full Music on-/ He stuns you by Degrees . . ." "Dickinson viewed all of human existence as essentially wounded by the malignity of a disappearing God," Wolff writes.

Wolff believes that near the end of Emily Dickinson's life her anger and defiance mellowed, and that she finally accepted God. Citing the poetry of the later years, the 1870s on, Wolff notes that while they profess faith, they do so in no way traditional, but quietly, and with strength.

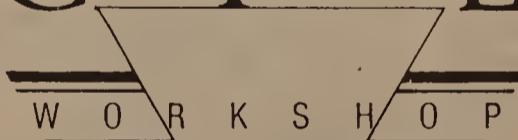
The chapter on love and the love poetry is understandably the weakest, since such little external evidence must be contrasted with the tease of a fairly large body of love poetry. Oddly enough, it is in this section that Wolff uses the poetry the least, instead relying upon letters and thus going against her method. Wolff names the usual, possible Dickinson lovers, Samuel Bowles, the Reverend Charles Wadsworth, and gives strong evidence for a love affair with a man whose Christian name, ironically, was Lord. But to her discredit, Wolff does not even mention, as Richard Sewall and many other biographers have, the possibility of Dickinson's lesbianism, a curious oversight, since she so closely examines Dickinson's heterosexual love life.

But Wolff does chronicle Dickinson's close relationship with her sister-in-law, Susan Gilbert Dickinson, with whom a lesbian relationship has been conjectured. It was to Sue that Emily Dickinson sent 276 poems, more than to anyone else. Finding an intellectual equal was not easy for Dickinson, and the importance of her relationship with Sue is clear. In a letter of 1882, Dickinson wrote: "Dear Sue, with the exception of Shakespeare, you have told me of more knowledge than anyone living." And in the last few years of Dickinson's life, when family problems had cooled relations between her and Sue, it was again a woman — Helen Hunt Jackson, a popular writer of the day — to whom Dickinson entrusted her work, and whose opinion she valued most.

Dickinson's most intimate friendship, though, was clearly with the reader: "So we must meet apart — / You there — I — here . . ." "Indeed," writes Wolff. "this short, two-line assertion might be taken as a true utterance about all of Dickinson's poetry: 'We,' the

Continued on Book Review page 7

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Victorian Infamy: Bosie and the Danger Queen

Continued from Book Review page 2

Of course, blackmail, scandal, and ruin are perennial money-makers, so Wilde has also been the subject of a minor publishing industry devoted to his life and art. Since his story had a gloriously unhappy ending, publishers could safely titillate the public with books about Wilde, his sin, and its wages. This had its flip side: for while writers about Wilde could and must deplore unnatural and unspeakable vice, all those books and articles led to homosexuality's becoming less unspeakable. While the only books about homosexuality a young gay kid might be able to find in the public library (aside from Bieber-Bergler clinical bigotry) would be about the Wilde scandal, at least there would be some nonmedical books about homosexuality there, and a bright kid might realize that if Wilde had had brain one, he could have stayed out of trouble. Nowadays, in our allegedly more enlightened and permissive times, the accounts are a little more lurid and detailed, but the stench of formaldehyde still hovers over the analyses.

An example of what I'm talking about is *Oscar Wilde: an illustrated biography*, by Martin Fido. This large glossy paperback, originally published in England in 1973, tosses out a few details of Wilde's sexual tastes and practices, but thanks one "Dr. Sumi Verma [who] gave me expert advice on the psychopathology of homosexuality." In researching his books on Dickens and Kipling, I wonder, did Fido consult experts on the pathology of heterosexuality? Despite its mildly patronizing tone, however, the book does give an adequate brief account of Wilde's life and times, and the illustrations (many in color) are well-chosen. Not bad for \$9.95.

More Letters of Oscar Wilde, edited by Rupert Hart-Davis, illustrates another aspect of the Oscar industry. Anyone who possesses a copy of Hart-Davis's huge 1962 edition of Wilde's letters will probably want this addendum for completeness' sake: 164 of the two hundred-odd letters which have turned up since 1962. Wilde always wrote gracefully, and *More Letters* can be read with pleasure, but the fact remains that most of them are on the level of this 1889 telegram to Clyde Fitch ("Prolific and successful American dramatist [1864-1909]," Sir Rupert helpfully informs us): "What a charming day it has been. Oscar." I don't think this is a good place to start if you are interested in Wilde's letters; look for the 1979 *Selected Letters*, which is available in paperback, instead.

In the case of a martyrdom like Wilde's there is always the temptation to look for a villain, and for a long time Lord Alfred "Bosie" Douglas was cast as Judas

by Wilde's admirers. While in prison, Wilde had written Douglas a long letter, later published as *De Profundis*, in which he accused the boy of having ruined him by spending all his money, distracting him from his art, goading him into suing Queensbury (Douglas' detested father), and abandoning him to his fate. But Douglas had his own admirers, who have done their best to rehabilitate him, with some success. The chief work was done by Rupert Croft-Cooke, who showed in *Bosie* (1962) that many of Wilde's charges simply were not true. Croft-Cooke, who had known Douglas personally, also insisted that he was a kindly man, capable of generous encouragement to young writers, and a talented if old-fashioned poet. Now H. Montgomery Hyde, an English barrister who has become one of the pillars of the Oscar Wilde industry with important books on Wilde's trials and on male homosexuality in Victorian England, has published a biography of Douglas which follows in Croft-Cooke's footsteps.

The trouble is that while Douglas was not quite as bad as his enemies claimed, he was still an amoral, paranoid little scumbag who in later life became a self-righteous prig without sacrificing one iota of his amorality or paranoia. Both Croft-Cooke and Hyde try to build Douglas up by running down Robert Ross, who earned a reputation as the man who stood by Wilde through thick and thin and restored his good name years after his death — and, not incidentally, published *De Profundis*.

It is true that Douglas remained in England at risk to himself after Wilde's arrest, visiting him in jail, raising money for him, trying to defend him in print after his conviction, and helping to support him after his release from prison. It is also true that Ross had not been linked sexually (and therefore criminally) to Wilde. We know now that Ross boasted privately of having been "Oscar's first boy" and that his homosexuality was more or less an open secret, but his later rehabilitation of Wilde did not put him at risk as it would have Bosie, who also had to rehabilitate himself. It is also true that Ross behaved very badly, not only keeping incriminating letters that legally and morally belonged to Douglas, but supplying those letters to Douglas's adversaries in his many court battles. (Douglas, on the other hand, would probably have destroyed the letters, so posterity's debt is to Ross.) But both Croft-Cooke and Hyde tend to minimize the fact that, unlike Douglas, who in a few years was denouncing Wilde as "the greatest force for Evil that has appeared in Europe during the past 350 years" (Hyde, p. 225), Ross worked devotedly to return Wilde's work to public

attention and raised his estate from bankruptcy. Ross also helped many living writers, and he was rightly honored for his services to literature when Douglas was trying to expose him as a bugger.

Now, Ross was no prize: his private life was as seamy as Wilde's. Douglas, by contrast, lived a mostly "respectable" private life after Wilde's death: heterosexual marriage interrupted by one brief adulterous (but heterosexual) fling when his wife left him, followed by years of — so he claimed — chastity. (I don't know whether to credit Samuel Steward's story of tricking with the elderly Bosie.) His public life, by contrast, was spectacularly nasty. Aside from his protracted campaign to destroy Robert Ross, he drifted into yellow journalism as the patron and disciple of T. W. Crosland. This involved him in numerous libel suits both as plaintiff and defendant, culminating in a prison term for proclaiming that Winston Churchill had been in the pay of Jewish bankers during the First World War. (Both Hyde and Croft-Cooke try to distinguish Douglas's anti-Semitism ["the Belloc-Chesterton variety"] from the "racialist" variety implemented by Hitler. This is horseshit. The lies Douglas — and Belloc and Chesterton — helped to circulate were the same paranoid fantasies used by the "racialists," who simply availed themselves of eugenic pseudo-science as an additional prop for their bigotry.) The point is that, his defenders to the contrary, Douglas never reformed, since homosexuality is not reprehensible. His most unappetizing qualities — vanity and bigotry — he hugged close to himself throughout his life.

If you are curious about Alfred Douglas, Hyde's book is a good successor to Croft-Cooke's now out-of-print biography. It's useful to see Douglas in the round, rather than as the boy who betrayed St. Oscar; and it's a real challenge to practice recognizing the humanity even of villains by contemplating the example of Bosie, a man who made a virtual career of denying the humanity of everyone who ever got in his way.

Dickinson

Continued from Book Review page 6

reader and poet, do indeed 'meet,' but only 'apart,' through the mediating auspices of Voice and the verse."

Despite the weakness of the love chapter, this important, valuable and insightful new work adds much to the already voluminous Dickinson canon. It is a book that gives full reign to its subject, enhancing, not reducing — as many biographies do — America's greatest poet.

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As Is: Anger and Love in a Dramatic Healing

As Is, by William Hoffman. Triangle Theater, 58 Berkeley St., Boston. Through May 23. 353-0434.

By Christopher Wittke

William M. Hoffman's "As Is," the hard-hitting drama about AIDS, is currently in its premiere Boston production at the Triangle Theater Company. Detailing the struggles of a gay man with AIDS in the earliest days of the epidemic, the play affords us the opportunity to see where our community has been and to gain a foothold on the future.

Michael Goodson plays Rich, a writer attempting to bury the last vestiges of a failed relationship and to deal with his recent diagnosis of AIDS. David Baird is Saul, his ex-lover and the reluctant backbone of the play. He has endured the pain of his breakup with Rich, but in the first scene he finds himself compelled to hurl a few last insults at his ex-lover, making the closure as difficult as possible. We see Rich squirm as Saul makes excuses for his behavior as the

result of stress; Saul has been watching the death toll among his friends and acquaintances rise almost daily and the uncertainty is having its effect on him.

"I'm very frightened," Saul says, "and I miss you. Say something, damn it."

"I have it," Rich replies.

The stage explodes in a sea of motion as the eight-member cast assembles and delivers a myriad of reactions to AIDS in general, and to Rich's disclosure in particular. The structure of the play and of life for its characters is never the same again. The narrative becomes kaleidoscopic, overlapping dialogue and settings trace the community's response to the epidemic and the reparation of the rippled ties between Saul and Rich.

Various aspects of life for people with AIDS are explored through the bulk of the play. We see Rich's anger, the alienation from his family and friends, his sexual and emotional conflicts. We also watch Saul become the strong one, who in the face of this seemingly insurmountable adversity pro-



Steven M. Auger and Michael Mullen play AIDS hotline staffers in *As Is*.

mises to love Rich no matter what, to take him "as is."

David Baird's multi-faceted performance as Saul is a powerhouse one. His ability to shift almost instantaneously from bitchy quean to sensitive, three-dimensional human being helps the entire production hit home. With one quick

drop of his shoulders he appears to shrink before our eyes, his bravado leaks out of him, leaving a tired and frightened vulnerability and a Saul with whom we can easily identify.

Michael Goodson's Rich has our sympathy from the beginning, first as the recipient of Saul's barb-

ed comments and then as the patient facing his mortality. Rich's health declines as the play continues and his anger increases geometrically. Both the script, which informs the audience that this is all part of the natural response to an AIDS diagnosis, and Goodson's honest performance allow us to empathize with his anger rather than be turned off by it. Goodson makes the most of what must be a very draining and difficult role to perform.

The supporting cast does double, triple, and in some cases quadruple duty as the significant others in the lives of Rich and Saul. They play everything from former lovers and doctors, to drug dealers and bartenders.

Michael Mullen plays Saul's squeamish and homophobic brother whose bedside reunion is one of many tear-filled moments in the production. Mullen also plays Barney, an AIDS hotline volunteer, as the type of quean that would probably be considered

Continued on page 8

Storytellers in Concert/Mainstage presents **Doug Lipman** in

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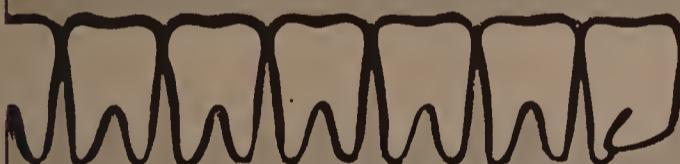
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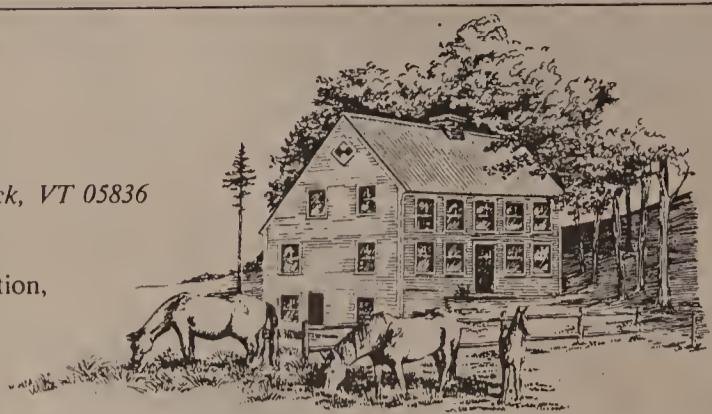
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As Is

Continued from page 7

offensive if he was played this way in an Eddie Murphy movie. Here he is comic relief personified, with the accent on relief.

Marjorie Burren's hospice worker opens and closes the play with monologues about her work with the dying. Her delivery is filled with humor and pathos, and her curtain-closing speech is an intense tear-jerker.

Steven O'Donnell's direction keeps the action flowing constantly; the play is performed without an intermission and its momentum is never lost. The tiny stage at Triangle's Paramount Penthouse Theater doesn't seem so small once the performance begins. Steve Weiss' evocative set pieces successfully suggest spaces as varied as cruise bars and hospice rooms.

The play is a fine representation of the artistic community's response to the AIDS crisis. For the audience, and probably the actors, sharing the experience is in its own way a healing one. Compared to Larry Kramer's "The Normal Heart," which is shrill and accusatory, "As Is" is gentle and loving. The characters mourn the loss of so many, but also experience the grief over losing the era of sexual experimentation. Theirs is a world filled with sorrow, but not regret, and the Triangle Theater Company fleshes out that world and makes it come to life before our eyes.

CDC

Continued from page 3

definitions."

Vought added that the scientific information available on ARC is so minimal that determining exactly what effect the new case definitions will have on final statistics is impossible. "There is so much non-descript symptomatology and such a wide spectrum of illness from fever and diarrhea to pneumonia that many cases simply are not reportable."

Vought estimated that at least 50 percent of people with ARC will eventually develop full-blown cases of AIDS.

Dr. Reddi, the epidemiologist for the Chicago Dept. of Public Health, believes that the new case definitions will place a burden on doctors and health officials. However, he said that the present reporting requirements may actually discourage some doctors from reporting. For example, he said that in some cases biopsies are required to prove that a person has AIDS, a requirement that causes many doctors not to report.

Reddi said that many health officials fear that overly stringent requirements for reporting will cause doctors to simply ignore the guidelines as they often do with chicken pox. "We must draw a fine line here between including everyone who tests positive as a person with AIDS and including only those with full-blown AIDS while respecting the increasing demands on doctors and health departments."

Officials in the federal government may also balk at the new definition because it is expected to add more people to disability benefit rolls. People with AIDS automatically receive Medicaid while people with ARC must prove their disability, a process that entails extensive paperwork and can take months to complete. Christen of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation said that denying people with ARC insurance is "inhuman." She stressed that the federal government should begin preparing immediately for the increased case load. So far, she added, the Reagan administration has done very little planning for the millions of people in this country who may develop ARC or AIDS.

-filed from Boston

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Spacious 6 rm 2 porch yd trees. 1 LF seeks other to share. No cig, alch, drugs. Pref prof over 30, neat, clean. \$337+. 628-9397. (44)

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L39 seeks nonsmoker to share house 50 mi west of Boston. Commute to So NH, Worcester, 495. \$250 incl heat, util, w/d, garden, more. 386-7737. (42)

LF 31 & 2 cats lkg for feminist woman to shr. Ige, sunny apt. w/bkdy in W. Som. Friendly. resp & neat. No smke/pets pls. \$275+. Call Eileen 628-6113. (42)

COUNTRY LIVING NOW
30+ LF home owner seeks similar or L couple to share home. Must love animals, no drugs/alco, able to pay \$500. Country setting-garden space avail. Littleton. 486-3064. (42)

GWM and 2 SWM, early 20's seek GM to share a beautiful Central Square, Camb 5 bdrm house. Fully furnished, near T. Modern kitchen, free laundry, large yard and plenty of privacy. Friendly, communal atmosphere. \$270+ util/month. Call Chris at GCN weekdays, 10-6, 426-4469. (C)

Sunny Somerville LF home nr Davis Sq. Lg rooms, 2 porches, garden. Semi-coop, semi veg. Cigarette & furry pet free. 2 housemates sk 3 more for June. \$260+. Please call 625-7435. (41)

L seeks roommate for lg 2 fam Dor-Melville Pk 3 blks Red In. Seek fem grad/prof. Wdflrs-sun-Indy wd deck, kit.priv. \$375 w/util. Call 288-0119. (41)

LF sks LF 25+ to share spacious Brkln Hse, near T. Semi-cp, sprtve, spirtl. No smkg, alc, drgs. Hve cat. Rent \$375+ util. Avail June 1. 232-9089. (44)

JAMAICA PLAIN QUIET
3F seek 4th for warm home. Indep, caring, semi-veg. L/bi/h. \$325+. Call 524-0424, 522-4219. Ages 28+. (41)

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LF seeks 2 roommates for spectacular Brookline apt. No pets or smokers. \$475 includes all. 964-4855. (41)

2L seek 3rd for Somerville apt. 2nd fl, sunny. Looking for non-smoker, 21+, responsible & FRIENDLY. Rent \$285+ util. Call 628-7744 9-3pm wkdys. (41)

2 LF and cat seek LF for 3 BR apt Somerville. Cozy, hardwood floors, 2 porches. We are friendly, warm, responsible — seek same. Rent \$233+ util. For May 1st. No smokers/pets please. Call Dina/Dianne 623-0310, 625-3910. (41)

2 Lf's seek friendly 3rd, 25+ for large, sunny Cambridgeport semi-coop. Call 576-3103. Keep trying. \$225+. (41)

HOUSING WANTED

San Franciscan coming east to start law school mid-summer. Need housing in Northeastern U. area. Alone or to share, calm, progressive home. Any leads? Reply PO Box 410933, S.F. CA 94141-0933 or call collect eves (415) 861-2839. (43)

4 or 5 BDRM apt/house wanted. \$200 per room., more heated. Anywhere in metro area. Call Loie 426-4469, days, or Julie 625-8013, nights. (C)

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GAY COMMUNITY NEWS has our TTY/TDD installed and ready for use! We are now accessible to the deaf and hearing impaired community. Our TTY/TDD number is (617) 426-0332. Typical GCN hours are 10-6 pm, M-F. Spread the word! (C)

Prisoners Seeking Friends

TO ALL THOSE WHO IN AND OUT OF PRISON FIGHT AGAINST THEIR BONDAGE
Alexander Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*.



GAY PRISONERS &
'PROTECTIVE CUSTODY'
Legal issues & cases around how
to get in and out of PC and
other ISOLATION situations:
write to GCN for 'Prisons
Within Prisons' and we'll send it
to you. (FREE!) (smile)



HUNDREDS OF MEN (&
WOMEN) THROWN TOGETHER
BY THE SYSTEM, SOMETIMES
FOR YEARS AT A STRETCH,
AND THE WORST INSULT THEY
CAN THROW AT EACH OTHER
IS THAT THEY MIGHT WANT TO
MAKE LOVE TO EACH OTHER
Send for a copy of Eric
Mann's 'Red Prison Movement' if
you're interested in an excellent
piece on the need to get
yourselves (ourselves!) together
against prison bullshit. Write
GCN for a copy of 'RPM'. IT'S
HOT! (and short too!) (smile)



JAILHOUSE LAWYERS (& others!)

The National Lawyers Guild has
begun a newsletter for jailhouse
lawyers & outside lawyers to put
you all 'in touch'! It is FREE to
jailhouse lawyers. (This summer
they will be publishing an UP-TO-
DATE Jailhouse Lawyers
Manual. They are also taking
short articles on legal aid issues
and needs; the deadline for
these articles is Sept. 1 for the
next issue of PRISON NET-
WORK NEWS. Write them now
for your copy of the PNN, also to
be put on the list for the JLM
(when it comes out), and also
with any articles you might want
to submit to them for possible
publication. Nat. Lawyers Guild,
853 Broadway #1705, New York,
NY 10003.



Love to write to some of you other
prison girls. Let me turn you on. Sexy
quick response. Marshall WOOD
(Joni), Rt 1 Box 207-C, Lawrenceville
VA 23868.

Incarcerated gay man seeking cor-
respondence from a free gay man. En-
joy music, TV, reading and many out-
door activities. Wish to develop
friendship with someone willing to
sponsor me for periodic furloughs.
Dennis DAWSON, Box 73, Norfolk MA
02056.

Gay man, 41, would like to cor-
respond with another gay man. Gerald
LUPINSKI, 137-158, Box 45699,
Lucasville OH 45699.

Tim Goodwin was not able to make
out the return address on a letter he
got from E. O'Donnell in Boston.
Could you (O'Donnell) write him again
with the address clearly. He found the
letter very interesting and would like
to correspond!

Greek passive, French active; FREE
in June! Going to grad school, seek-
ing permanent relationship based on
friendship and love. Charles SKIN-
NER, 4520 W. Stanton, Lincoln NE
68524.

Lonely gay man interested in cor-
responding with any (color, age, etc)
gay man for friendship. I need some
help putting together a job plan for
the autumn. Photo would be nice, but
not a must. Ronald B. TAYLOR, Rt 3
Box 213, Smithfield NC 27577.



Hi! My name is Paula, I'm 23, have
many interests. I'm a 'Baby Dyke' and
wish to write women who love 'Heavy
Metal'. Paula McCUALEY, 4481
Bowers Rd, East Troy WI 53120.

SF, age 22, attractive, lonely, in
search of a penpal. Jan
LAZAROVICH, 205 Rocky Hill Rd,
Northampton MA 01060.

Hey, black girl! Just wanted you to
know that one day you're going to be
my wife. Times are rough, but our love
is strong. Sandy, I will wait forever
and a day to love you. Carla



I'm a pre-op TS (one of a kind here!)
but I manage to keep my head high.
Still I find it frustrating and lonely at
times. I'd really like to place an ad for
penpals. Keep up the great work! Kyle
EDMISTON, 13695, Box 400, Rawlins
WY 82301.

Effeminate male seeking letters from
the free world. Interests include
reading, writing, music. Presently in-
volved in suit against prison censor-
ship of GCN, RFD and other gay
publications. Would really appreciate
moral support! Charles McCORKLE,
133442, Holman 37, Atmore AL 36503

Sexy transvestite seeking to become
a transsexual is discharging early in
88. Looking for a warm-hearted man
who is willing to help me get started
up again. Willing to go anywhere, but
prefer around Boston. Please write.
Diane JOHNSON, 106474, Rt 1 Box
207-C, Lawrenceville VA 23868.

Sexy Puerto Rican, Black sparkly
eyes, interested in receiving some
nice hot letters from masculine men.
Inside or out (but if you're inside,
don't put your jail number on the
return address). Hector POLANCO,
86A 6131 (F-9-14), Box B, Dannemora
NY 12929.

Letters to someone in prison are
sometimes as precious as life itself,
as those letters give you a reason for
living and hope for the future when
you're DOWN! I'd like to write some-
one to talk to. Edward G. EVANS,
C-41476, Box 8101 Rm. 2144, San Luis
Obispo, CA 93409.



I have light auburn hair, am petite,
and have many hobbies. I believe
strongly in faithfulness and friend-
ship. I don't believe in hurting others
or in being hurt. Would like to hear
from a loveable man on the outside. I
go by Deanna. SASE please. Barry D.
WADDELL, 181-679, Box 45699,
Lucasville OH 45699.

I'd like to hear from gay men or gay
women. Both are interesting. I'm a
poet and songwriter and just looking
for a friend to talk to. Adam CANALE,
B-102103, 1150 SW Allapattah Rd, In-
diantown FL 33456.

My family and friends have pretty
much abandoned me since my
becoming a prisoner. I would like to
be in touch with someone. I enjoy
C&W music, the out-of-doors, and
simple things generally. Please write.
Jack McDONALD, 184-474, Box
45699, Lucasville OH 45699.

I am writing to your newspaper
because it is a gay paper and also
because I've always been interested
in that part of the country. I'd like to
request a penpal. I like music, reading
and sports. Greg SWANK, 164001, Box
4571, Lima OH 45802.

30 yr old Capricorn man seeking cor-
respondence. I'm very mellow and
don't let life harrass me too much.
Gary David LASSLEY, 287458, Box
520, Walla Wall

CALENDAR

May 9
to
May 17



As Is, 9 saturday

9 saturday

Somerville — *Tracks in the Snow*, 1982 Dutch gay-inclusive film. Somerville Theater. Info: 625-1081.

Cambridge — "Sisterhood" **Alcoholics Anonymous** meeting 10th anniversary party. YWCA, Temple St. Meeting: 7:30PM. Dance: 8:30-midnight. Donation requested.

Cambridge — Lesbian singles rap, "Recovering After Breaking Up." DOB, Old Camb. Baptist Church, 1151 Mass. Ave. 8PM. \$1. Info: Jean, 277-8150.

Boston — **Triangle Theater** presents "As Is," by William Hoffman. 58 Berkeley St. 8PM. \$10. Through 5/23. Info: 353-0434.

Cambridge — "Milk from the Bull's Horn," storytelling by **Doug Lipman**. Welch Aud., Lesley College. 7PM. \$8, \$7 students & seniors. Info: 391-3744.

10 sunday

Cambridge — **Black & White Men Together** monthly meeting. Philips Brooks House, Harvard Yard. 1-5PM. Potluck, all welcome.

Brookline — Gay & Lesbian Defense Committee **Picnic & Demo at the Dukes**. Meet at Knyvet Park, Amory St. between Comm. Ave. and Beacon. 1PM. Info: 661-7737.

Jamaica Plain — Lesbian & Gay Neighbors potluck dinner, **parents welcome**. First Church Hall, corner Eliot & Centre Sts. 4-7PM. Bring a dish & non-alcoholic beverage. Info: 522-3894.

Cambridge — "A Tribute to Our Mothers," reading by Pleasant St. Writing Brigade. New Words Bookstore, 186 Hampshire St. 2-5PM. Childcare: 926-9778.

Brookline — Lesbian singles' brunch. Restaurant Veronique, 1329 Beacon St. 11AM. Info: Jean, 277-8150.

Boston — Book signing party for **Daniel McVay**, author of *The Vanilla Kid*. Glad Day Bookshop, 43 Winter St. 3:30-5:30PM. Info: 542-0144.

Cambridge — Reading by **Isabel Miller**, author of *Patience and Sarah*. DOB, Old Camb. Baptist Church, 1151 Mass. Ave. 3PM. \$3. Refreshments. Info: 661-3633.

Boston — 1270 softball team auction. 1270 Boylston St. 6PM-midnight.

Boston — "Boston's Other Voice" interviews Mel King. WROR, 98.5 FM. 12:30AM, "Monday morning."

11 monday

Cambridge — Multi-Issue Taskforce of March on Wash. AFSC, 2162 Mass. Ave. 7PM.

Mission Hill — Lesbian/Gay Neighbors monthly potluck. 7PM. Info: Denise, 232-2108 or Peter, 734-0046.

12 tuesday

Cambridge — Coming Out rap. DOB, Old Camb. Baptist Church, 1151 Mass. Ave. 8PM. \$1. Info: 661-3633.

Boston — Legacy drop-in social for lesbian/gay elders & friends. GLCS, 6 Hamilton Pl. 6-8PM. Info: Ann, 725-3485.

13 wednesday

Cambridge — Lesbians 35+ discuss "Being Attracted to Unavailable Women." DOB, Old Camb. Baptist Church, 1151 Mass. Ave. 8PM. \$1. All women welcome. Info: 661-3633.

Jamaica Plain — AIDS & The Psychology of AIDS: a forum sponsored by Lesbian/Gay Neighbors of JP. Agassiz School, 20 Child St. 7:30PM. Free. Info: 522-6253.

Boston — "Say It Sister," with host Jennifer Abod. Call-in program on old lesbians. WMBR, 88.1 FM. 7-8PM. Info: 494-8810.

Boston — The Institute of Contemporary Art presents a retrospective of Derek Jarman's films. Through 5/17. Info: 266-5152.

Cambridge — Politics of Fat, a women's group. Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 7:30PM. Info: 354-8807 or Judy, 321-8636.

14 thursday

Boston — GCN's production night. All welcome. Proofreading: before 8PM. Paste-up: after 7PM. 62 Berkeley St., near Arlington & Back Bay T-stops. GCN: 426-4469.

Cambridge — Planning meeting for second annual Lesbians & Children Conference. New members welcome. Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 7PM. Info: Jodie, 628-6446.

Boston — Lesbian/Gay Pride Planning Committee. 34 Edgerly Rd., rear entrance. 7PM. All welcome. Info: 267-2113.

15 friday

Boston — GCN's volunteer night. All welcome to help mail GCN to its subscribers. Refreshments, good times. Anytime after 6PM. 62 Berkeley St., near Arlington & Back Bay T-stops. GCN: 426-4469.

Cambridge — Angry Arts presents *The Fertile Memory*. YWCA, 7 Temple St. 7:30PM. \$3. Info: 625-9279.

Cambridge — Casselberry-Dupree in concert. Paine Hall, Harvard Univ. 8PM. Sign interpreted, wheelchair accessible. \$12 advance, \$13 at door. Info: 491-4290.

Brookline — Am Tikva discussion: Gay/Lesbians/Jews in the USSR. 1762 Beacon St., Workman's Circle. 8PM. Potluck reception. Info: 782-8894.

Cambridge — The Brattle Theater presents films by the gay Russian director Sergei Paradjanov. Info: 876-4226.

Boston — Boston Film/Video Foundation presents an episode from "Two in Twenty," a lesbian soap opera. 1126 Boylston St. 8PM. \$4/\$3 members. Info: 536-1540.

Arlington — Wheatstone Bridge & Rod McDonald. Uncle Sam's Backyard, St. John's Episcopal, 74 Pleasant St. 8PM. \$5.50. Info: 641-2131.

Cambridge — Gays at MIT end of year party. Info: 253-5440.

Amherst — UMass Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Concerns presents Joyce and Justina, and the Girillas in concert. The Bluewall. 8PM. Info: (413) 545-4824.

16 saturday

Cambridge — Lesbian singles discuss Sex and the Single Lesbian. DOB, Old Camb. Baptist Church, 1151 Mass. Ave. 8PM. \$1. Info: Jean: 277-8150.

Boston — Gay/Lesbian Defense Committee Freedom Dance at the Metro. 15 Lansdowne St., near Kenmore T-stop. 9PM. Info: 661-7737.

Somerville — Libana in concert. Somerville Theater, Davis Sq. 8PM. \$8-11.50. Info: 625-1081.

Provincetown — DOB dinner at the Lobster Pot. Commercial St. 6:30PM. Info: Steph, 357-5774.

Boston — "Something About the Women" program on civil disobedience. WMFO 91.5 FM. 11AM.

Boston — Non-traditional careers workshop. Women's Technical Institute, 1255 Boylston St. 10:30AM-noon. Free. Info: 266-2243.

Lowell — Gaylaxian Science Fiction Society. 7PM. Info: P.O. Box 1051, Back Bay Annex, Boston, MA, 02117.

Brookline — The Ayurvedic Rehabilitation Center presents a two-day workshop: The Immune System: Candida, AIDS, Cancer. \$100/125. Info: 782-1727.

Boston — Black & White Men Together Spring Fling. 195 W. Newton. 8PM-2AM. \$5 advance, \$6 at door. All welcome. Info: Dwight, 426-5472 or David, 547-1986.

17 sunday

Boston — Protest Supreme Court Chief Justice Rehnquist at B.U. Nickerson Field, Gaffney & Comm. Ave. 10AM. Info: 354-8807.

Cambridge — Rosario Morales, Leslea Newman and Sharon Howell reading their work. Braun Room, Harvard Divinity. 5-7PM. \$5. Info: 628-3754.



Casselberry-Dupree, 15 friday

Boston — Lyle Glazier, author of *Summer for Joey*, book-signing party. Glad Day Bookshop, 43 Winter St. 3:30-5:30PM. Info: 542-0144.

Watertown — Gays & Lesbians of Watertown (GLOW). 7PM. Info: P.O. Box 373, Newtowne Branch, Boston, MA, 02258 or Rich, 926-5371 or Lou, 926-6329.

Cambridge — Cambridge/Somerville Lesbian Neighbors potluck brunch. All welcome. Noon-2PM. Info: 776-7909.

Cambridge — Tag Sale to benefit Pledge of Resistance and medical aid to Chile. 11 Garden St. Donations welcome. Info: Marcie, 648-0776.

Northampton — Sue Fink in concert. Northampton Center of the Arts. 7PM. \$6-9. Info: (413) 586-8718.

Worcester — Gallery 69 A presents a two-person exhibit by Stanley L. Moore and Dana Medina. Opening reception: 2-5PM. 69A Hammond St. Through 6/14. Info: 756-6681.

Old Times. By Harold Pinter. Directed by Eric Engel. At the New Ehrlich Theater through May 10.

At the beginning of "Old Times," Kate (Samantha Timmerman) and her husband Deeley (Richard Averbunch) sit in the livingroom of their nice house in the country. They're expecting a visit from Anna, Kate's "one and only friend." They haven't seen each other since she and Anna shared an apartment in London 20 years ago. Deeley's tone is sarcastic, and increasingly annoyed as he asks his wife a series of questions about the nature of the two women's past relationship. Anna (Terry Stoecker), though she hasn't yet arrived, stands with her back to the audience looking out the window. When she turns around, the three of them are having coffee after dinner. Whether or not the women once were lovers is never confirmed or denied. But it certainly seems as though they were more than just roommates.

When the playwright was first working on "Old Times," the characters were simply A, B, and C. In the interest of providing more leading parts for women actors, I'm glad he made Anna's character female, though I doubt that was his motive. More likely it was to add another layer of ambiguity. There's a lot of innuendo and significant looks passing between Anna and Kate, but Pinter doesn't have anything particular to say about women loving women.

What's most intriguing about Pinter is his ability to evoke a kind of twilight zone where things are simultaneously uncovered and obscured. While his characters do and say the most inexplicable things, they remain perfectly convincing. (Some of the credit for this deservedly goes to the three actors in the New Ehrlich production.) Soon after Anna arrives she begins a dreamlike reminiscence saying, "There are some things one remembers even though they may never have happened." During the course of the play, each character tells of events that may or may not have happened 20 years ago. Real or not, it's the telling of these events that has the effect.

Anna reminisces about all the fun they used to have when they were young and free in the big city. From what Anna says, her life still has excitement and romance. Deeley counters with his retelling of how he and Kate first met in an empty movie theater showing *Odd Man Out*. Anna and Deeley try to outdo each other by showing they understand and appreciate Kate more than the other does. In a funny scene this escalates into a singing match as they serenade her with lines from old favorites like "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes."

For the most part, Kate listens complacently to the two of them, but ultimately she's not too thrilled by all of this. In the first act she objects to them talking about her in the past tense, as if she were dead. In the end she has plenty to say, the meaning of which is too obscure. It's not that I have to know if Anna really has a husband. Or if she and Deeley actually had met before. Or even if she and Kate really had been lovers. Still, Kate's final speech fails to bring the play to a satisfying conclusion.

Pinter is fascinated by innuendo and its effects. For me, his plays don't have a message per se (which probably saves them from being pretentious nonsense), but I admire his skillful use of language, his timing, and the subversive way his characters interact. When Deeley feels overshadowed by Anna's presence, he insists, more than once, that he is Kate's *husband*. Therefore he has certain rights and expectations within the conventions of marriage. Much of what goes on in "Old Times," however, falls into a grey area outside such conventions.

—Monica Heilman

Gay Community News and
The Pledge to Resist the U.S. War in Central America
take great pleasure in presenting a weekend of entertainment
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FRIDAY JUNE 12 • 8:00 P.M.



THE DANCE BRIGADE

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Please call the Pledge or GCN to arrange for childcare.
This event will be interpreted in ASL and Spanish. 

*If you desire, your name will be listed in the program if you respond by June 1.

SATURDAY JUNE 13 • 9:00 P.M.

DANCE PARTY

featuring

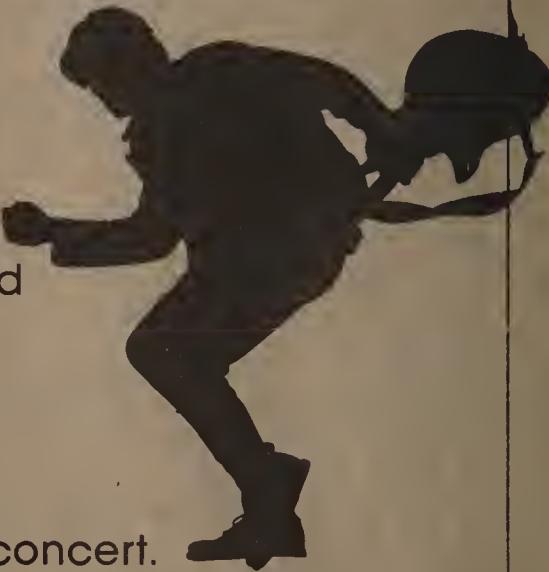
RIGHT TIME, Boston-based "World Beat" dance band

DEAN and the WEENIES, radical beat from NYC

JOHN DEMETER, Boston's "movement" d.j.

at City Hall, Government Center 

\$5 in advance, \$7 at door, \$3 at door if you present
your ticket stub from the June 12th Dance Brigade concert.



Advance tickets available in Boston at Glad Day Bookshop; in Cambridge at New Words Bookstore, Bodyworks Gym or Sandy's Music; in Jamaica Plain at Redbook, Food for Thought, or Arborway Video. Mail-order tickets available through the Pledge at 11 Garden Street, Cambridge, or GCN at 62 Berkeley St., Boston. Tickets purchased through mail will be held at door.